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FOR THE OLD LAND.

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THE OLD LAND

A Tale of Twenty Years Ago

BY

CHARLES J. KICKHAM

AUTHOR OF "KNOCKNAGOW," "THE UNTENANTED GRAVES," ETC.

NEW EDITION

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FOR THE OLD LAND.

CHAPTER I.

MR. AMBROSE ARMSTRONG IS SURPRISED—AN ARCH-FRAMED PICTURE—CHANGE AND NO CHANGE.

"THE bridge!" exclaimed Mr. Ambrose Armstrong. And the old gentleman's face could scarcely have showed greater astonishment if the solid limestone structure, upon which his wide-open eyes were fixed, had then and there been flung across the stream by enchantment.

The happiest days of his life, Mr. Armstrong was wont to say, had been spent "between Glenbawn Mill and the Bridge of Corriglea." The children, some of whom had the notion that he slept all the winter like the swallows, used to welcome the waving of his fishing-rod, as if it were the magic wand that called out the primroses and turned the sloe-bushes white. But the primroses and the swallows had thrice come and gone since the angler was last seen turning the bend of river below the rabbit burrow that brought him in view of Corriglea Bridge.

Bridges in general had an attraction for Mr. Ambrose Armstrong. There were half a dozen of them north, south, east, and west of his home, which he seemed to regard very much as old acquaintances. When he came to one of these bridges in his solitary walks, he was no longer alone. He paid them special visits—particularly on moonlight nights; and even when casually passing,

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however great his hurry might be, would linger for a minute as if to exchange a "How do you do?" with the bridge.

But this bridge of Corriglea, which is within a stone's throw of one of our highest mountains, and upon which he now gazes with open-eyed wonder, was his especial favourite. Indeed, we shrewdly suspect that it was for the sake of Corriglea Bridge that all the other bridges came in for so great a share of Mr. Ambrose Armstrong's regard. This might have been accounted for by the fact that Corriglea was the terminus of his fishing excursion. But there were other reasons besides, as will presently be seen, and for three long years, until this moment, Mr. Ambrose Armstrong never saw Corriglea Bridge,—except in dreams. He looks over his shoulder following every twist and turn of the little river, as if to convince himself that he is not dreaming now. "By Jove, I have made a wonderful recovery," he reflected, stamping his feet upon the soft grass, and swinging his left leg backward and forward, to make sure that the stiffness in the joints was gone. "*I have* walked every step of the way—climbed over fence and stile, and here I am without pain or ache and not a bit tired! I never felt stronger or younger since the day I was born! I have made a wonderful recovery!" And, as his eyes swept slowly over the familiar landscape, his pale and singularly handsome face lit up with wondering delight. Mr. Ambrose Armstrong looked the very picture of a happy old gentleman.

But as he raised the lid and peered into his all but empty basket, the angler's expression lost a good deal of its radiance.

The day, to be sure, was rather calm, but the currents and eddies were numerous between Glenbawn Mill and Corriglea Bridge. And the sun could only fling his rays upon the stream for a minute at a time and at long intervals, through an occasional rent in the grey curtain that covered the sky, while the breezes, which every now and then bent the long grass and set the poplar

leaves fluttering, never once blew from the east. Mr. Armstrong put on his silver-rimmed spectacles and minutely examined his flies, which he pronounced perfect in every detail. And no man in his right mind could entertain a doubt as to their being the "right flies" for the day and the season and Corringlea river.

"There must be heavy rain over-head," Mr. Armstrong remarked, looking up at the clouds, as he replaced the spectacles in their case and walked a few perches away from the river to a low rustic gate, upon which he rested his arm, and looked through one of the arches of the bridge. The centre of the picture framed by the arch was a handsome house with a glass porch. The lawn in front was tastefully planted with lindens and other ornamental trees which, however, were only in their childhood; while a well-grown grove of fir trees, fringed by a single row of ash and sycamore, sheltered the place from the north wind.

There was a dreary look in Ambrose Armstrong's eyes as, with his arm upon the top bar of the rustic gate, he gazed wistfully through the middle arch of Corringlea Bridge. And soon he was dreaming.

Instead of the handsome house and the winding avenue he saw a low thatched roof and a narrow breen and a fair young face flushing into rosy gladness at his approach. "Old times!" he murmured, as the vision faded, and a gleam of sunlight, clear and soft rather than dazzling, brought out the details of the arch-bound picture with such distinctness that he could see or fancied he could see, the scarlet geraniums in the glass porch. Turning his eyes to the opposite side of the river, he seemed to regard another homestead which stood just at the base of the mountain, with equal but evidently less painful interest. It was a two-storeyed house of a style of architecture which appears to have been in much favour with "strong farmers" eighty or a hundred years ago. Ugly and vulgar to look at are these big slated farm houses, particularly when—as is often the case—the walls happen to be of a dirty white. But

the most fastidious eye would fail to detect the faintest trace of either ugliness or vulgarity in this old house of Martin Dwyer's at Corriglea, and for the simple reason that every inch of its masonry was covered with ivy.

"No change there," thought Mr. Armstrong, with half-amused, half-melancholy smile. "The house, the orchard, the trees, the fields—everything just the same. I could almost fancy that the identical bundles of flax and fleeces of wool are still upon the 'loft,' where I hid myself from Martin, to read the 'Vicar of Wakefield' in peace and quietness. And" he continued, putting his hand to his ear, "I almost expect to hear Martin's voice shouting my name, as it was borne by the breeze that day down from the Brown Rock among the ferns, and into the little window on a level with the floor, upon which I was stretched. He wanted me to go to the river to hunt waterhens. But, I wouldn't exchange the 'Vicar' and peace and quietness for all the hunting in the world. But though everything seems unaltered," he added as he took off his hat and stroked his silvery hair, "Martin Dwyer's head and mine are grey."

CHAPTER II.

MRS. DWYER THINKS NED CORMACK SHOULD HAVE MARRIED A SENSIBLE WIFE INSTEAD OF AN IDLE YOUNG LADY; BUT NANNIE AND NELLIE CANNOT SEE IT.

"Tom," said Mrs. Martin Dwyer, "look out and try can you see any sign of your father coming home. I don't know in the world what can be delaying him. He ought to be home an hour ago."

"Something may have delayed him about the new plough," her son replied as he turned up his coat cuffs and commenced washing his hands in a wooden basin, which his sister Nannie had placed on the stone sillings under the kitchen window; while his sister Nellie ran into one of the two adjoining bedrooms for a towel.

Nannie and Nellie were twins, and seemed to have been cast in the same mould; but differently coloured. When there was not sufficient light to see that Nannie had blue eyes and golden hair, and that Nellie's tresses were raven black and her eyes like night, their most intimate friends were continually mistaking one for another; and even their brother Tom used to try in vain to discover which was which from their tones and accents, or the silvery laugh evoked by the perpetually recurring mistakes as to their identity.

"We met Mrs. Cormack to-day," said Nellie, looking up into her brother's eyes—which were dark like her own—"and she asked us to tea this evening. And you must come with us," she said.

"Oh, yes, do come, Tom," said Nannie. He knew

it was Nannie, as the voice came from the parlour, where she was standing near the window folding up two muslin dresses she had just finished ironing—and which seemed as undistinguishable one from the other as the fairy-like forms they were intended to drape. “I’ll think about it,” returned Tom Dwyer in a tone of overdone indifference, rubbing the towel quickly over his face, which of course would account for the redness of his forehead and temples, though the rubbing did not reach above the eyebrows, and was chiefly confined to the left side of his nose.

“Father Feehan will be there,” Nannie continued, “and I think Mr. O’Keeffe.”

This information seemed to put Tom Dwyer into a brown study; and, moving towards the door, he fixed his dark eyes earnestly upon the house with the glass porch on the opposite side of the river.

“Is he coming?” Mrs. Dwyer asked from the chimney-corner.

“Who?” Tom asked with a look of surprise. “Oh, yes—my father” he continued, turning his eyes from the house with the glass porch to the bridge. “No, I don’t see him on the road.”

“I suppose,” returned Mrs. Dwyer, “’tis talking about this election he is. He’s not the same man at all since Bill Kirwin came over about his vote.”

“There was a report this morning,” said Tom, “that one of the candidates would retire. If that be so the Tories won’t have any chance, and there won’t be a contest at all.”

“I hope so,” returned his mother, in anything but a hopeful tone. “We’re not lucky at all,” she continued, wiping her eyes with her apron. “Look at the Cormacks rolling in riches, and when I came here first what had they?”

Receiving no reply to this question, Mrs. Dwyer, looking round at her son and suddenly changing the lugubrious for the indignant, exclaimed—

“Didn’t Molly Manogue tell me that it was Ned

Cormack's grandfather's first cousin that made the old kitchen chairs that were here when I got married, and that they used to go about selling them at the fairs, with a lame mule that had only one ear. And nothing would do for Ned but to go all the ways to Cork for a wife; a lady out of a boarding-school, if you please. I declare," continued Mrs. Dwyer, with a scornful laugh, "she used to be afraid of the cows; and to see her with her gold chain and her sunshade coming out of a thatched cabin! Everyone said she'd break Ned Cormack, horse and foot."

"But she didn't," Tom remarked, rather dryly.

"Because he was lucky," retorted his mother, sharply. "But things turn out so queer," she went on, relapsing into the fretful. "Look at me up early and down late, and my mind confused about everything, and what have I? And look at her with her covered car and her outside car, and nothing to trouble her but reading books and playing music, and going out to drive like a lady when the horses wouldn't be at work; I declare she walked to Mrs. Costelloe's wake rather than stop a plough from the seed-sowing. I'd stop fifty ploughs," added Mrs. Dwyer, grandly, "sooner than I'd trudge like a beggar to any decent woman's wake; yet you'd think 'twas Lady Oakdale they had, there was such respect for her."

"Mrs. Cormack was always very kind to us," said Nellie, who fancied she saw a gloomy look darkening her mother's face like a cloud.

"Sure I know she is kind and friendly to you," returned her mother. "And when you were born didn't she stay up nursing me for a week after the doctor gave me over? And she was always very fond of Tom ever since the day he jumped into Poul-nacopple and saved Margaret from being drowned." And Mrs. Dwyer's face glowed with good-nature as she bent forward from her low stool and began thrusting pieces of furze and thorn bushes under the huge pot that hung over the fire.

"And why do you speak of her in that way?" said Nellie, who noticed that Tom's face had become quite red without the help of the towel which he had thrown playfully upon her shoulder, after that vigorous application of it to the left side of his nose.

"I'm not saying anything to her," rejoined her mother, in a self-satisfying way. "I'd be long sorry. I only say thas the wasn't a good wife for Ned Cormack."

"I think," persisted Nellie, "that Mrs. Cormack is a very fit wife for Mr. Cormack."

"She is *now*," Mrs. Dwyer answered, "when she has her fine house, and her carpets, and her flowers and everything; but at that time he had a right to marry Julia Flaherty, who had twice her fortune, and was a good industrious girl, and not an idle young lady."

"And if Mr. Cormack did marry Miss Flaherty, would he be better off than he is now," asked Nellie.

"Why wouldn't he?" replied Mrs. Dwyer, looking at Nellie reproachfully over her shoulder as if the silliness of the question surprised her.

"Well, now," said Nellie, while her dark eyes sparkled with mischievous fun, "tell me how it would have been better for Mr. Cormack if he had married Miss Flaherty? I heard you say he had ever so much money, and you are always talking of how rich he had become."

"My goodness, child," returned her mother, "it was the talk of the country that the wife he got would break him, horse and foot."

"But you see she did not," said Nellie.

"Hasn't she a piano?" exclaimed Mrs. Dwyer, driven to her wit's end for an argument. "I was on the stairs there"—and Mrs. Dwyer pointed impressively to the place—"with Tom in my lap—'twas the year every child in the parish got the lethnack (or the mumps, as the doctors called it)—and when Molly Manogue told me that Ned Cormack's wife had a piano I declare my mind became confused."

"It was fortunate for us that Mrs. Cormack got a

piano," said Nannie, who had just come out from the parlour, holding the muslin dresses, one in each hand. "It is only now I am beginning to understand how much we owe to her."

"'Tis true for you," returned Nellie, emphatically.

"And am I saying it isn't true?" their mother asked, suddenly pulling in her horns. "Sure she took as much trouble about you as she did about her own children," and the good woman's face beamed again, as she contemplated the muslin dresses; having a vague sort of consciousness that her pretty little daughters would not be exactly what they were if Ned Cormack, in deference to public opinion, had married Miss Julia Flaherty. But Mrs. Dwyer's dim perception of this fact was due more to the muslin dresses—the making of which her accomplished neighbour had superintended—than to the mental and moral advantages Nannie and Nellie had derived from their intercourse with the occupants of the house with the glass porch, which at that very moment was fading like a dissolving view from Mr. Armstrong's vision—to make way for the lowly homestead, into which Ned Cormack, in his stupid insensibility to the fitness of things, had introduced a lady wife and a piano—as the old angler, leaning upon the rustic gate, gazed dreamily through the middle arch of Corringlea Bridge.

CHAPTER III.

TOM DWYER WONDERS WHY HIS FATHER SHOULD BE HARD-SET TO BE PREPARED FOR THE GALE-DAY, WHILE NED CORMACK HAS HUNDREDS OF POUNDS IN BANK—THE “GREAT WOMAN FOR BUSINESS” AND THE PIG-TROUGH—SHE THINKS TOM MAKES TOO MUCH OF THESE CORMACKS.

NELLIE was altogether mistaken as to the cause of the cloud upon her brother's brow. Ned Cormack's wealth and the fortunes his daughters would get was an every-day topic of conversation amongst the neighbours, and latterly the unpleasant reflection would force itself upon Tom Dwyer, when listening to their discussions, that his own sisters would have no fortunes at all. It was this thought and not his mother's uncomplimentary references to his friend, Mrs. Cormack, that brought the gloomy expression noticed by his sister into Tom Dwyer's face. He walked into the parlour, and drawing one of the high-backed mahogany chairs close to the window, sat down to ponder the question. Why Ned Cormack had hundreds, perhaps thousands, of pounds in bank while his own father was often hard-set enough to be ready for a gale-day. The very newspaper which Tom Dwyer drew from his coat-pocket suggested the thought—“How easy he takes the world.” Mr. Cormack had flung the paper across the river to him a few hours before, having finished the reading of it in the shade of the hazels which grew thickly upon the bank at the end of his lawn. And Tom could remember

that even in the time of the old thatched house—when Ned Cormack was supposed to be only “snug”—the newspaper was read as regularly and leisurely as at present; while his own father never had a minute to spare from dawn until dark, and usually sat down to his meals in his shirt-sleeves. (The newspaper was always associated, in Tom’s childish imagination, with the circumstance, that Mr. Cormack had been some years at a classical school, and to the same circumstances he used to attribute his respectable-looking neighbour’s long brown overcoat and dark trousers and his habit of changing his shoes in the evening even in dry weather.) And if his father’s industry was proverbial, though the not altogether complimentary phrase “always in the drag” was sometimes applied to Martin Dwyer, of Corriglea—were not his mother’s praises sounded all over the parish the very day after the hauling home, by that walking repository of fashionable and other intelligence, Molly Manogue, as a “great woman for business” and a “fine housekeeper.” Tom was reminded of this last-mentioned circumstance by hearing his mother’s voice in a sufficiently loud key to be distinctly heard above the ear-piercing music of twelve newly-weaned “bonives”—scolding the said Molly Manogue’s niece, Cauth, because the removal of the big pig-trough from one corner of the yard to another was too much even for the strength of Cauth Manogue’s tremendous red arms. “Begor, I’m not able, ma’am,” gasped Cauth, pushing her matted locks from before her eyes and straightening her broad back.

“You big, lazy, good-for-nothing struppish! Go out and call in Mick Connell and Paddy Brien,” retorted Mrs. Dwyer, rationally concluding that it would require at least two able-bodied men to perform the task which the “big, lazy, good-for-nothing struppish” found beyond her strength.

Tom knew that there was no earthly reason for disturbing the pig-trough, which in all probability would be dragged back to its old place the very next day.

But Mrs. Dwyer gave directions to the workmen, evidently greatly impressed with the gravity of the undertaking, walked along slowly after them till they laid their burden down in the appointed corner of the yard, when Mrs. Dwyer brightened up, and put her arms akimbo, seeing which, Mick Connell and Paddy Brien put off their funeral looks; and Cauth, who had brought up the rear of the procession, breathed freely. It seemed to have suddenly dawned upon them that the removal of the pig-trough, was not after all, so solemn a proceeding as bearing a dear friend to his last resting place. Cauth ran gleefully into the kitchen, and soon reappeared, straining under the weight of a huge pot, the contents of which she poured into the transplanted trough; around and into which the noisy and hungry brood crowded and tumbled, Mick Connell pronouncing them "darlin's," to the intense delight of his mistress. Then all four looked on till the "darlin's" having sucked the pig-trough dry, and indulged in divers frisks and capers, such as putting the tip of their noses in the identical point of space occupied by their tails in the tenth of a second, alternated with short intervals of reflecting and listening stillness, dispersed in search of knowledge and adventure among the ducks and hens, warily keeping clear of the goslings, whom their venerable parents seemed jealously bent upon bringing up in complete isolation from their fellow-creatures.

The last "darlin'"—and the smallest, started in pursuit of its fellows, having executed the feat of exchanging places between its nose and its tail, five times in a second; besides turning and twisting the hinder half of its chubby and dimpled person—without imparting the least perceptible motion to the other half—in all possible directions, and in a manner, from an anatomical point of view very surprising to behold. Whereupon it seemed to Mick Connell and Paddy Brien that their business there was done, and they made some show of an intention of returning to their work in the field. But their mistress, in recognition of their exemplary

conduct, invited them to the dairy to have a drink of milk. Then Mick Connell, having finished his draught, drew the sleeve of his flannel jacket across his mouth and referred casually to "a row" that had taken place the night before between "Big Norry" and her brother-in-law, the details of which proved to be of such enthralling interest that Mrs. Dwyer seated herself upon a diminutive milking stool and listened spellbound till the narrator had concluded his story. And Mick Connell and Paddy Brien were seen returning to their work in the field, just two hours and a quarter from the time they had been called in to remove the big trough; leaving the "great woman for business" still sitting upon her stool equally charmed with the manner in which that useful undertaking had been brought to a successful conclusion, and with the story of the row between Big Norry and her brother-in-law. Mrs. Dwyer regarded every hour, except those spent in the dairy and the kitchen, or about the farmyard, as so much valuable time thrown away. Even in her own parlour she felt uneasy and out of her element. On a summer Sunday afternoon, when Nannie and Nellie were out for a walk by the river, or up the hill among the ferns, and Cauth was gone to see her aunt, Mrs. Dwyer would plant her chair sufficiently near to the dunghill to be convinced of the old sow's bodily presence by the evidence of no less than three of her five senses. Nannie and Nellie would sometimes ask their mother why she did not sit on the rustic seat in the orchard. But who knew better than Mrs. Martin Dwyer, of Corrigea, that the odour of apple blossoms and the twittering of birds "would never pay the rent?"

"I wonder where was Tom going in such a hurry, and the dogs after his heels, as usual," thought Mrs. Dwyer, grasping the iron handle of the barrel-churn, to assist her in rising from the diminutive milking-stool. "I was going to call after him; but my mind was so confused about the trough, he was half way down the meadow before I could think of what I was going to do,

He makes too much of these Cormacks," Mrs. Dwyer went on, as she walked to the dairy door. "And he has a way of crossing the river without going round by the bridge. If he had a chance of Margaret I wouldn't be surprised. But Molly Manogue tells me that for certain her match is made with that O'Keeffe. A fine lob she'll have in him," continued Mrs. Dwyer, scornfully. "And all the talk they have about her beauty. Oh! there she is sailing up and down by the river with her red cloak and her curls flying. I wonder how she can find time for walking this hour of the day?" exclaimed Mrs. Dwyer, indignantly, as drawing herself up to her full height, and with arms akimbo, she stood upon the threshold of the dairy door, and looked proudly around the farmyard. "But I declare Nannie and Nellie will soon be as foolish as any of them. There they are again at their botheration flowers. I'm sorry I let 'em put their geraniums and their 'slips' and 'bulbs' and nonsense in that corner, that was so handy for the young turkeys, and nothing in the world growing in it that 'd do 'em any harm. But they said the nettles and the dock leaves looked so ugly under the window. 'Twas Mrs. Cormack, I know, put 'em up to that. I wonder is it over there Tom is? If it be, her ladyship is paying him a poor compliment marching up and down there by herself." And Mrs. Dwyer darted quite a bitter glance across the Long meadow and the river at the young lady, who, all unconscious of the indignation of which she was the innocent cause, continued her walk by the hazels, with her red cloak and her curls flying.

CHAPTER IV.

TOM'S WAY FOR GETTING OVER POUL-NA-COPPLE WITHOUT SWIMMING—THE COST OF A VOTE—FARMER AND POLITICIAN—AMBROSE ARMSTRONG'S EARLY LIFE—MARTIN DWYER HEARS GOOD NEWS—SEVERAL GENTLEMEN CONNECTED WITH THE LAW ARE DISGUSTED, AND SAMMY SLOANE, THE BAILIFF, LOSES HIS APPETITE.

THE two houses, though within a few hundred yards of each other, were, for all practical purposes, a furlong or more apart. Tom, indeed, as his mother remarked, had "a way" for getting to the opposite bank of the little river without going round by the bridge—which "way" Nannie and Nellie, after divers explorations among the bushes, had failed to discover, and Tom, in spite of much coaxing, seemed determined that it should remain a tantalising puzzle to them. An arm of a gnarled oak did reach more than half way over Poul-nacopple, the deepest pool in the whole river—and so called because—a hundred years ago or more—a horse had been drowned there; his rider Mr. Philip O'Dwyer, only escaping the same fate by kicking himself out of his top-boots, which had got fastened in the stirrup-irons. (You will observe that the Dwyers of Corringlea wore top-boots, when the Cormacks of Rockview were mere nobodies).

But if Nannie and Nellie, instead of creeping along the arm of the oak tree and looking fearfully down into the clear, dark depths of the "Pool of the Horse," had topped to the arm of the elm tree on the right hand

side they would have seen that a strong branch of this elm tree met and mingled with a strong branch belonging to another elm tree that grew on the opposite bank. This was Tom Dwyer's "way" for crossing the river; and we at once reveal the secret—not caring to treat our pretty and inquisitive readers as he thought fit to treat his pretty and inquisitive little sisters—who tried again and again, but all in vain, to find out how Tom managed to get from the Long Meadow to Mr. Cormack's lawn, and right over Poul-na-copple too, without swimming. But had the secret not been discovered by somebody else, Tom Dwyer would not be the hero of this simple story; though possibly, were it not for that same discovery, he might have been a hero of another sort.

On the present occasion, however, Tom Dwyer, instead of making straight for Poul-na-copple, as his mother imagined, crossed the Long Meadow diagonally towards the bridge. He had caught a glimpse from the parlour window of Mr. Armstrong's white hat, and in a state of joyous surprise hurried out to welcome the angler back to his old haunts, after so long an absence.

"I'm glad to see you down the river once more, sir," said Tom, as he sprang over the road-fence.

"I never expected it, Tom," returned the old gentleman, evidently touched by the expression of mingled gladness and tenderness in the young man's dark eyes.

"I said I'd venture as far as the rabbit-burrow to-day, but I must have got over the stile in a dream, for I never came to myself until I raised my head and saw Corriglea Bridge within fifty yards of me. I was never so much surprised in my life. I was just thinking," Mr. Armstrong continued, turning his eyes towards the old farmhouse, "that everything is exactly the same as when your father and I were boys. And I believe, so far as his heart is concerned, your father himself is as little changed as the old place."

"I never saw him lose courage until now," returned Tom Dwyer, gloomily—"till he got that order from the

landlord last week not to promise his vote to anyone. Father Feehan called on him the same day; and he's not the same man since, as my mother is just after saying."

"You don't suppose that Mr. Perrington could disturb him?" Mr. Armstrong asked, with an anxious and even alarmed look at the young man, whose eyes were bent gloomily upon the ground.

"Well," he replied, thoughtfully, "I'm afraid there is something in it. He's greatly in debt, and the large fine he'd be sure to get for our place is a great temptation. I often think it is hard to blame the landlords when they see they have the law at their side."

"But I remember when your grandfather used to vote against the landlord, and no great harm ever came of it," said Mr. Armstrong.

"Yes, but that was before Emancipation, sir, when nearly every tenant, big and little, had a lease," Tom Dwyer replied. "I heard a good deal about those times from Rody Flynn, and besides there was a principal at stake then. Now I can't see what a great difference it makes whether a man votes at all or not. But a landlord has no right to ask a tenant to vote against his conscience, and on the other hand, has anyone else a right to force a man to vote against his landlord. Between them it is a hard case for the poor man who is in the landlord's power. If he goes with the landlord he'll be denounced and hooted, and degraded in his own eyes as well as in his neighbour's, so that life will be a burden to him. And if he goes with the other party—then comes the notice to quit, and even if he is not put out, the misery he sees his wife and children suffering in their terror that the threat will be carried out, for weeks and months after the election, is enough to break a poor man's heart, and all this misery must be endured," the young man added, his dark eyes flashing with indignation, "not for the sake of principle or the good of the country, but for the sake of place-hunters and humbugs."

"What you say is true, Tom," said Mr. Armstrong, in his mild way. "But if a man refrains from voting altogether, it ought to satisfy both parties."

"Instead of that," rejoined Tom Dwyer, "it wouldn't satisfy either. Father Feehan got quite angry when my father said he'd stay at home. He'll expect every voter in the parish, he says, to go to the poll."

Mr. Armstrong, still leaning upon the wooden gate, pressed his thin white hand over his eyes, and remained so long without speaking that Tom Dwyer began to fear the old gentleman was not so fully recovered as he imagined, and was suffering from pain or exhaustion. Raising his head at length, the old angler said with a weary sigh—

"I was always a dreamer, Tom. Always thinking of doing something that is still undone. Fifty times I was on the point of asking my father long ago to give Martin Dwyer a long lease, but I never had the energy to do so. The recollection of this shot like a pang through me just now when what you have been saying brought before my mind the possibility of your father and family being driven from that old house and those fields, the greater part of which has been reclaimed from the barren mountain side by him and his forefathers. But I can't believe," the old gentleman added with a gesture of his hand, "that such a thing can ever happen."

* * * * *

Ambrose Armstrong was the son of an attorney who, during the minority of the present landlord, managed the estates upon which the Dwyers of Corringlea were the oldest and most respectable tenants. One day the attorney took his sickly little son with him in his gig when going his customary rounds among the tenantry, and finding that the boy seemed to have taken a liking to John Dwyer's eldest son, who was about his own age, left him to play in the old orchard during a long summer's day. In the evening, as Mrs. Dwyer was lifting him into the gig, little Amby turned round

his head and burst into tears on seeing his playmate at the orchard gate looking shyly and regretfully after him.

"Leave him to me, sir," said the farmer's warm-hearted wife, "and you'll see how strong the mountain air and the goat's milk will make him."

"I will," replied the attorney with subdued emphasis, after a pause, during which his eyes glanced alternately from his son's pale face to the ruddy cheeks of the sunburnt urchin at the orchard gate. "Will you stay with Mrs. Dwyer, Amby?"

"Yes sir, please," returned the boy, the tears again rising to his eyes; and thus commenced a life-long friendship between Martin Dwyer and Amby Armstrong—who for upwards of seven years after lived almost entirely at the old ivied farmhouse, trudging daily to the village school with Martin Dwyer, quite winning the old schoolmaster's heart by the gentleness of his manners and his superior penmanship. The penmanship and the wonderful improvement in the boy's health suggested to the attorney that after all "Amby might be good for something." He was sent for a couple of years to a good school, and then duly installed in his father's office. The delicacy of the lad's constitution, however, soon began to tell against him, and the attorney saw the wisdom of allowing him long intervals of rest. It was during these holidays that John Dwyer initiated him into the mysteries of the "gentle craft." His friend Martin, even in those early days preferred holding the plough to amusement of any sort.

"Don't you think," said Mrs. Armstrong, addressing her husband one morning as he stood up from the breakfast table, "don't you think that Amby is getting to look very pale and ill again?"

"Yes," was the reply, "I have noticed it. I fear he'll never take kindly to the law."

"Why do you say that?" Mrs. Armstrong asked. "It is too hard he works. He never cares to go anywhere, except an odd time to the Glebe."

"He must try Mrs. Dwyer's prescription now at all events," said her husband. "Nothing sets him up like the goat's milk and the mountain air. I really believe if she had not asked me to leave him that day when he was a little fellow he'd be in his grave long ago."

"They must be very kind people," said Mrs. Armstrong. "Amby was always so anxious to be with them when he was a boy; but now that he's a young man, and so much admired, I can't help wondering why he cares so little for society. And why do you say he doesn't care for law? Is it because he plays the fiddle?"

"Not exactly," her husband replied, "but I have reason to suspect that he pens a stanza when he should engross."

"Do you mean writing poetry?" Mrs. Armstrong asked in surprise.

"That's just what I do mean," replied the attorney, gloomily. "A fishing-rod and a book of ballads under his arm was bad enough; but if, as I am told, it was he wrote the verses in Saturday's *Loyalist*, I give him up."

"Oh, you shouldn't say that," returned his wife. "They were all praising that little poem at the Glebe last evening. Now I see why they like Amby so much. They prize talent more than anything."

"All very fine," the attorney answered with an impatient shake of the head. "Have his shirts and stockings ready," he added after a pause, "and I'll take him over to Corringlea on Friday."

Mr. Armstrong returned home from Corringlea that same Friday, more doubtful than ever as to Amby's "doing any good." Not that he had lost faith in the efficacy of Mrs. Dwyer's prescription, or that the fishing rod and book of ballads were likely to prove more deleterious than usual; but there was John Dwyer's eldest daughter just returned from the convent boarding school, one of the most intelligent and graceful girls he had seen for some time.

"I never thought of this before," the attorney soliloquised, as he tightened the rein while passing over a little mountain rill that crossed the road. "He didn't seem a bit surprised either—as I was—to see her grown such a fine young woman. And so far from showing any surprise or bashfulness at seeing the change in her, she looked and laughed at him as if he were still a boy. "However," he continued, looking at the bright side of the picture, "she appears to be a sensible girl who won't listen to nonsense. She'll be getting married in Shrove. And nothing worse will come of it than an outbreak of poetry. Ned Cormack would be a good match for her," the attorney went on, his mind reverting to business. "She doesn't look like the sort of girl that would turn up her nose at a man because he or his father got up in the world—instead of coming down as so many have done. I'm glad Ned Cormack got that farm of Connelly's. He's a decent sort of fellow." And Mr. Armstrong touched his horse with the whip and got him into a brisker trot, as he thought of the cheque presented to him by Ned Cormack on getting possession of Connelly's farm. "But he ought to build a decent house without waiting for a lease. He's the best tenant on the estate now, only that he is so cautious."

The attorney's guess was a shrewd one enough. Ned Cormack did propose for Ellen Dwyer, though Molly Manogue, who was supposed to be omniscient in such matters, never got the slightest hint of it. Ned Cormack was not the man to set people talking about his match-making until he had made pretty sure that it would not end in talk. He learned from John Dwyer's daughter herself that her vocation was to be a nun, and the escapade to Cork was the result. It was not, however, generally known that the lady who played the piano and was afraid of the cows was a great friend and regular correspondent of his first love. In fact the escapade to Cork was all Ellen Dwyer's doing, and in after years Ned Cormack's children were her pupils

and her pets, and even at the time our story commences—when these children were young women, and their father's hair sprinkled with grey—Sister Mary Bernard could never mention Ned Cormack's name without blushing. But as for that matter, her nephew, Tom Dwyer, noticed that a rosy tinge used to steal into his aunt's pale cheek whenever she inquired whether Mr. Armstrong still came down to the river to fish. However, it must not be inferred from this that he also wanted to marry her.

On the contrary, even in his father's presence, on that Friday evening when the attorney's fears for his son's safety were just awakened, Miss Dwyer made laughing allusions to the low thatched house beyond the river, and the narrow boreen, at which young Amby Armstrong blushed like a girl. For it so happened that Ned Cormack had a sister who sang certain favourite ballads of his with such ravishing sweetness that the young angler often returned to the ivied farmhouse with an empty basket, confessing to Ellen Dwyer that he had lost the best part of the day listening to Aileen Cormack's singing. And how the memory of those hours clung to him for ever after! And how changed everything seemed when the voice that so charmed him was hushed for ever! But even when Aileen Cormack was mouldering in the silent dust, and Ellen Dwyer was a cloistered nun, the ivied farmhouse—and above all, the bridge—had a charm in the eyes of Ambrose Armstrong which he felt that no other spot on earth could ever possess for him. And as the quiet years rolled on until these last three, he was seldom missed during the spring and summer months for many days together from the river, between Glenbawn Mill and the bridge at Corriglea.

"I am always a dreamer, Tom," Mr. Armstrong repeated again, still looking earnestly towards the old house, and the orchard with its wall of great boulder stones. His heart sank within him as he pictured his old schoolfellow and life-long friend with his wife

and children driven—as he had seen so many others driven—far from their home. “Tom is a strong young fellow,” he reflected, “who can make his way in the world. And as for his mother, she can grumble and complain to her heart’s content wherever she is. But poor Martin’s heart would break. And then the poor little girls!”

Nannie and Nellie had called to see him the previous Sunday after Mass, and how bright and happy they looked as they told him about their flowers in that corner that used to be so “handy for the young turkeys.” At the thought of the bright, happy little creatures, the tears came into the old gentleman’s eyes; and glancing hurriedly towards his companion, by whom he did not wish his emotion should be observed, he was struck by a strange expression in the young man’s face.

Yes, there was Miss Cormack walking up and down by the hazels, in her red cloak, and with her long curls floating in the air. But what was there in that to account for the look of surprise and sorrow in the face of his young friend!

“She’s a fine girl, Tom,” Mr. Armstrong remarked, tauntingly.

“There’s no mistake about that, sir,” Tom Dwyer answered with a solemnity that the occasion scarcely demanded. “She has the name of being the finest and the handsomest, and the most accomplished girl in the country.”

“And she knows how to walk,” added Mr. Armstrong, moving a step backward in order to keep the young lady in view to the end of her walk—for they were looking through the arch of the bridge. “I’d only ask to see the motion of her head to know that she has a graceful carriage. But now, Tom,” he continued more seriously; “tell me, is there anything between her and you? I am more deeply interested in the matter than you may suppose. I’ll perhaps tell you the reason why another time.”

"There was never a word about it," Tom answered with quiet emphasis.

"Oh, it may not have come to words," returned Mr. Armstrong.

"Nor to thoughts," said Tom, with a laugh. "And if I did think of her it would be little use for me. It is generally said that no one but an estated man will get her; and sure there's nothing surprising in that."

"You talk like a sensible man, Tom. Her father will expect a rich husband for her. But do you know, I think you'd have the mother's good word; you were always such a favourite with her. And now tell me honestly what was the cause of that look of blank disappointment I noticed in your face just now? You were certainly looking at the lady in the red cloak at the time."

"It had no reference to her at all, sir," Tom Dwyer replied, dropping his eyes thoughtfully upon the ground. "The fact is," he added after a pause, and with a sad sort of smile, "the thought that came across my mind when I saw her walking by herself was"—here Tom Dwyer became embarrassed, and looking about him—as people are apt to do under such circumstances—he saw his father standing on the bridge with his hands resting upon the parapet, much in the attitude and with the expression of an after-dinner orator, conscious of having his speech well by heart, looking smilingly down upon them.

"My father is glad to see you, sir," he remarked, not sorry for the relief from his embarrassment. "'Tis long since I saw him in such good humour."

"I never saw him in anything but good humour," said Mr. Armstrong, returning Martin Dwyer's wave of the hand. "But certainly he does seem to be in unusually high spirits," he added, as Martin Dwyer, his thin and worn face beaming with childlike glee, flourished his hand above his head, and then brought the open palm slowly down upon the parapet, as the

before-mentioned after-dinner orator might have concluded a rhythmic and convincing peroration.

The old farmer, after another wave of the hand, got over the stile with an agility that reminded Mr. Armstrong of early days, and walked quickly along the path through the meadow which led straight from the bridge to his house.

"He's after hearing some news," said Tom. "Maybe, 'tis about the election."

This remark brought back the picture which Mr. Armstrong's fancy had conjured up a few minutes before—the old farm-house a desolate ruin, or occupied by strangers, and Martin Dwyer and his family exiles in a strange land, and, as if wishing to drive it away, he said hurriedly—

"Tom, tie up my rod," and opening the wooden gate he crossed an angle of the next field and came out through another gate upon the road, going at once—as a matter of course—to the bridge. A little to his surprise, he caught a glimpse of the red cloak disappearing within the glass porch; for it looked as if the young lady had seen and wished to avoid meeting him. His thoughts, however, were too busy with the old farm-house and its occupants to give much heed to the whims of even the "finest and the handsomest girl in the country;" and he was rather startled a few minutes afterwards when he felt his hand grasped by Ned Cormack, who welcomed him to Corringlea Bridge with a warmth that was unusual with him.

"Margaret saw you," he said. "And they all want you to come in. Shake hands with Mr. Armstrong, Eddy," he added, turning to his little son, a bright, curly-headed boy of six or seven. "He'll be telling hereafter," he continued, "how he met you here on the bridge."

"Why," Mr. Armstrong asked, a little surprised, "are people likely to remember me hereafter?"

"To be sure they are," was the reply. "Everyone missed you these two or three years. Won't you remember Mr. Armstrong when you are a man, Eddy?"

"Yes, sir," replied the boy, who however, seemed to be entirely occupied with the wheel of the fishing-rod, which Tom Dwyer allowed him to turn round and round.

"I'm going up with Tom," said Mr. Armstrong.

"But I'll run in on my way home to see Mrs. Cormack and the young ladies."

"Make him stay for the night, Tom," said Mr. Cormack. "Father Feehan is coming over; or, if you wish," he continued turning to Mr. Armstrong, "I'll pack you into the covered car and send you home at any hour you like."

"Well, when I have taken a rest on the rustic seat in the orchard, I'll think about it," returned Mr. Armstrong. "I hope the seat is still there?" he continued turning to Tom.

"It is just as it was the day you got your photograph taken there," was the reply. "The little thatched roof keeps off the rain, so that the timber is as sound as ever."

"I often hear that same photograph discussed," said Mr. Cormack. "My daughter Alice says its the handsomest face and head she ever saw. I forget the name of the saint she says it is like."

Mr. Armstrong smiled, and perhaps a little bashfully, while Tom Dwyer laughed aloud, and turning round upon his heel seemed to have discovered something on the top of Kileafrehaun that wholly absorbed him for several minutes.

"And she has some of your poetry set to music," Mr. Cormack added. "Good-bye till evening. Come, Eddy, my man, shake hands again with Mr. Armstrong."

Mr. Armstrong and Tom Dwyer seeming to have forgotten the stile and the path through the meadow—walked on in silence, until they came to where the road from the bridge met that which skirted the mountain, when Mr. Armstrong said—

"I suppose Alice has grown to be a fine girl since I last saw her?"

"So she is, sir," Tom answered assentingly, rather

than as if replying to a question. "Though people don't take much notice of her, the sister is looked upon as such a beauty."

"Does she sing well?" Mr. Armstrong asked, his thoughts going back to the wood-notes wild that flung their magic spell around him long ago.

"Wonderfully!" Tom Dwyer answered. "'Twould thrill through you till you wouldn't know what was coming over you."

Mr. Armstrong smiled, but said nothing.

"Mrs. Cormack," Tom added, "was saying she wouldn't let her go back to school this summer as she was not very strong. It was Mrs. Mary Bernard that noticed it, and advised her to bring Alice home at Easter."

Again their conversation was interrupted by old Martin Dwyer, who was hurrying towards them from the house, with the same elated look as when they first saw him standing on the bridge. In fact from that moment to the present Martin Dwyer seemed to be on the brink of a side-splitting burst of laughter. Every object his eyes chanced to rest upon seemed provocative of mirth. Miss Cormack's ringlets floating on the breeze as she paced slowly up and down by the river, the lark that sprang from under his feet as he leaped with almost youthful lightness over a drain in the meadow—even a lonely heron on the top of a dead pine in a marshy corner near Poul-na-copple—though the very incarnation of desolation and despair—seemed to intensify Martin Dwyer's tendency to risibility as he hastened to tell his wife the "good news" he had heard at the forge.

A heavy deadening load was lifted from many another heart besides Martin Dwyer's that day. Men who for weeks before had moped idly about, or gone through their daily tasks listlessly and with relaxed muscles, drew a long breath of relief, and resumed their wonted energy and cheerfulness. And women, wiping away the tears that sprang into their eyes at the glad tidings, went into their rooms, closing the door softly behind

them, dropped upon their knees, and with clasped hands offered up prayers to Heaven for an unhopèd for mercy—The Honourable Horatio O'Mulligan had retired. There was to be no contest!

Fifty or sixty gentlemen connected with the law were disgusted. And Sammy Sloane, the process-server, ate his rashers and eggs that morning without an appetite. But some thousands of poor tenants-at-will rejoiced; and for their sakes—even without thinking of Martin Dwyer and his pretty little daughters—we are not sorry that the length (or the shortness) of the Hon. Horatio O'Mulligan's purse prevented him from "contesting the county" against the other Liberal candidate, the wealthy but ungrammatical Mr. Brummagem. In fact we are glad; the legal gentleman, and Sammy Sloane, the process-server, and a great many others—including an embryo sub-inspector of police or two—to the contrary notwithstanding.

"No contest!" said Martin Dwyer, as a turn in the road brought them in view of the old ivied farm-house.

"Is that so?" Mr. Armstrong asked, turning to his old friend, whose silence, taken in connection with his evident high good-humour, was beginning to cause him some surprise. "I am very glad to hear that piece of news, Martin."

"Yes," returned Martin Dwyer, moving to the side of the road, and raising his head high, so as to be able to see over the larch grove, the loads of lime that dotted a square patch of pale brown, like little white tents a good way up the mountain. "I'll go on with the lime-burning."

Tom looked at Mr. Armstrong with a shake of the head, which said as plainly as words—"What a simple poor man my father is! He thinks the danger is over." And now Mr. Armstrong bent his eyes upon the ground as he reflected that a general election must come within three years, and might come before the end of one.

The light that sparkled in Nellie's eyes, and the more liquid lustre that beamed in Nannie's as they ran down

to the road to welcome their old friend, brought a sympathetic gleam into their brother's face—which had been unusually clouded ever since he saw Miss Cormack walking along on the river bank.

The little girls hurried Mr. Armstrong away to see their flower-beds, before he could shake hands with their mother, who smiled approvingly as if the substitution of the flower beds for the rank docks and nettles was all her own doing, and looked like a woman who had never quarrelled in her life.

"Don't ye know," she said at length, "that poor Mr. Armstrong must be starved and tired? Come in, Mr. Armstrong, and don't mind their flowers till you're after having something to eat."

"Now," said Mr. Armstrong, turning to Nannie and Nellie, having done ample justice to the repast which Mrs. Dwyer, with many suggestions of regret that she had not been earlier apprised of his coming, had placed before him—"Now, let us go out to the orchard, and I'll have a rest on the old seat."

Tom walked up the hill, ostensibly to see how Mick Connell and Paddy Brien were getting on with the lime-spreading; but in reality to sit under the Brown Rock and commune with his own thoughts.

CHAPTER V.

NED CORMACK'S WIFE'S PIANO—A MUSIC REVOLUTION—
WHICH DOES NOT INTERFERE WITH THE PRODUCTION
OF BUTTER—A CONNUBIAL CONFAB.

MARTIN Dwyer's prosperous neighbour was not a tenant-at-will, yet he too, on hearing of the step taken by the Hon. Horatio, rubbed his hands gleefully and repeated the words, "by gad, I'm glad of this," so often that his wife looked at him with some surprise.

"I thought," said Mrs. Cormack, "you had your mind made up?"

"Yes," he replied, "I'd go with my landlord, but I know what a cry would be raised against me.

"Do you think Father Feehan would have minded much?" Mrs. Cormack asked, thoughtfully.

Her husband shrugged his shoulders, but made no reply.

"He is such a friend of ours," she added, "and such an amiable man, I don't think he would be unreasonable. He did not seem very angry when you said you would make no promise."

"Didn't he?" rejoined Ned Cormack, with another shrug. "I thought you were a closer observer."

"Well, I'd be very sorry that he should fall out with us," returned Mrs. Cormack, "and it would be a great shock to Margaret and Alice, who have been such favourites with him. In fact, I'd almost rather see you incur the displeasure of the landlord. What harm could he do you, as you have a lease?"

"Ah! I have laid out a great deal of money on this

place," her husband replied. "You know I could only get a twenty-one years' lease; and only for the old house was going to fall I'd never think of building with such a lease. But, as you said yourself, when it should be done at all I might as well do it well."

"The old house was very nice after all," she remarked.

"Yes, for a picture," returned Ned Cormack, glancing at a sketch in water-colours that hung framed and glazed over the chimney-piece. "You made a very nice picture of it." But he looked back regretfully for all that, to the early years of their married life, which passed happily under the thatched roof, fully a yard deep, that looked so well in the picture; the "first coat" of which had been grasped in the horny hand of the reaper, before Cromwell cast his eyes upon the slope where it grew, and pronounced Ireland "a country worth fighting for."

Mrs. Cormack, too, looked regretfully at the picture, and smiled as she remembered how her parasol used to come into contact with the eve, bringing down a shower of broken brown and black straw upon her. A bit of one of them was detected upon her bonnet in the chapel one Sunday by the lynx-eyed and satirical—though sensible and industrious—Miss Julia Flaherty; and she and some other young ladies were afterwards heard expressing their wonder how Ned Cormack's wife could "come in such style out of a cabin." But, as has been before indicated, the "whole country" was talking of the "style" of the young bride from Cork, and her "gold chain," and the absolute certainty of her "breaking Ned Cormack, horse and foot." All this "talking," however, was thrown away, for fortunately Mrs. Cormack never heard a word of it. That extraordinary young woman amazed and, indeed, frightened Molly Manogue by telling her one day, just as Molly was coming to the kernel of a toothsome bit of gossip, that she "did not like story-telling." This was a staggerer. But the piano! *That* quite knocked the breath out of social criticism, so far as

Mrs. Cormack was concerned. There was a general stare of incredulous astonishment, a lifting of the hands, and a turning up of the whites of the eyes when Molly Manogue announced the arrival of the piano; and henceforward Ned Cormack's wife was looked upon as a privileged person who might do just what she liked—drive in a coach-and-four over Corrignlea Bridge, for instance, or invite Lady Oakdale to an evening party—without exciting the least surprise, or calling forth remark or comment other than complimentary, even from Miss Julia Flaherty and her particular friends.

It must, however, be borne in mind that at the time of Ned Cormack's marriage, the parson's daughter was the possessor of a piano, not the *envied* possessor—people would as soon have thought of envying an angel for having wings—of the only stringed instrument in the whole parish, of course, excepting fiddles, which were more numerous than they have ever been since. We were going also to except a guitar, the property of an old lady, the widow of a Waterloo officer. But that had long ceased to come under the category of stringed instruments—ever since the veteran, during his last attack of gout, brought it into violent collision with his physician's head for hazarding the opinion that the famous phrase "Up Guards, and at them." belonged to the region of fiction rather than that of history. Both the doctor and the guitar were silenced; the one for the time being, and on subjects having reference to the Battle of Waterloo; the other for ever. But the "soul of music," which was knocked out of the guitar, seemed to have been knocked into the cranium, for the doctor for many years after was troubled with a singing in the head.

At least in the matter of music we have been making wonderful progress those dozen years past. Only the other day a young friend, at our request, counted no less than three-and-twenty pianos within the boundaries of the parish. But we must confess that the gratifi-

cation afforded us by those statistics was modified considerably by the further information, incidentally added, that the three-and-twenty pianos were "all out of tune." We learn, however, that a movement has been set on foot by the dispensary doctor to secure the occasional services of a tuner from the county town. And from our personal knowledge of the doctor's popularity and energy—and bearing in mind the intrinsic goodness of the cause he advocates—we venture to predict that harmony will reign from end to end of our parish long before the Phooka takes his next annual gallop over the summits of the surrounding hills.

Cynical people may ascribe the harmonious revolution just chronicled to an unhealthy hankering after "gentility," but we are satisfied that a genuine love of music has been at the bottom of it. Nor is this love of music confined to the fair performers themselves. The Scotch agriculturist who would only consent to his daughter's getting a piano on the express condition that she should "do her practising while he was out about the farm," has not had a single imitator in the whole parish of Shannaclough. Though perhaps the "practising" is sometimes most agreeable when softened by distance, and listened to in the intervals of a *shannachus* with an old neighbour from the kitchen chimney corner. And doubtless "the concord of sweet sounds," with which at such moments the bucolic soul is "moved," loses nothing of its sweetness from the reflection that it in no way interferes with the more serious domestic duties.

"I never filled so many firkins as since I bought the piano for my daughter," a thriving farmer was heard to soliloquise in the market-house a week or two ago, while his eyes dwelt complaisantly upon the "butter ticket." "A little education, after all, doesn't do the least harm to a girl," he added, as he put the ticket into his pocket.

But better still, the humblest home—even the hearth of the poor labouring man—is vocal with the sweetest

music below the stars—Irish children's voices attuned to the melodies of their own land of song.

After a silence of some minutes, during which both Mr. Cormack and his wife unconsciously continued to gaze upon the picture over the chimney-piece, the latter said:—

"I am very glad you are not to be troubled about your vote." She took the silver thimble from her finger and laid it in its place in the work-box on the table beside her, and waited to see whether the husband happened to be in a conversational mood. It was evident she had something particular to speak about, but did not wish to introduce it too abruptly. "It is strange," she remarked, closing the lid of the work-box noiselessly, "that Father Feehan should be so anxious for the return of men like this young O'Mulligan, who only want to get places or something for themselves."

"And their friends," said her husband with a smile, in which there was more than a suspicion of sarcasm.

"Do you think," she asked—evidently *apropos* of the last remark—"do you think does Mr. O'Keeffe mean anything particular by coming here so often lately?"

"Yes," was the reply; "I have got a pretty broad hint of it."

"And what do you think?"

"I don't like it," he answered almost harshly, drawing his little son—who was turning over the leaves of a picture-book at the table—quickly towards him, and running his fingers through the boy's crisp auburn curls. "He is too deeply in debt."

"I thought that was not his own fault, but his father's," said Mrs. Cormack.

"And what difference does that make when he is in debt?" her husband asked with a look of surprise.

"Oh, it makes a great difference," she replied.

"Well, you are right," said Ned Cormack, looking

admiringly at his wife, of whose clear good sense he was very proud. "It *does* make a great difference. But he'd be expecting too much money." And Ned Cormack passed his hand over his little son's face, and pressed the curly head against his waistcoat.

Six or seven years before Ned Cormack would have contemplated the possibility of Mr. Robert O'Keeffe, of Cloonmore, becoming his son-in-law with more than satisfaction. But that little curly head leaning against his waistcoat was not in the world then. And since its coming—all un hoped for as it was—a complete change had come over the spirit of the father's dreams. To get his daughter well and respectably married was now a very secondary ambition with Ned Cormack, of Rockview. He began to think with dismay of that "big fortune" so often spoken of in connection with his handsome daughter; and sometimes wished that she, like his first love, Ellen Dwyer, would go into a convent.

"Well, what would you think of Mr. Delahunty?" Mrs. Cormack asked after another interval of silence.

"Mr. Delahunty has plenty of money," cried little Eddy. "He gave Jerry a half-crown for holding his horse."

"Oh! Eddy," exclaimed his mother after exchanging a glance with her husband, "there is the young ass coming towards the paling. He'll put his head in and crop some of the flowers. Run out and drive him away."

"He, too, is looking for money," Ned Cormack replied, when Eddy had run out into the lawn, "and besides, business men are so uncertain. There are few of them now like your uncle."

"That's true," replied Mrs. Cormack. "But still you see it is business men who are purchasing estates everywhere."

"Yes, but what kind of business men? Men who began at the beginning, and lived over their shops till they had made their fortunes. They did not commence with a country house and a carriage, like Delahunty."

"Oh, I must say," returned his wife, "that I'd be always uneasy if Margaret was married to him. He is too fond of display, and so is she. I could see that the carriage had its effect upon her. But I fancy she'd prefer Mr. O'Keeffe. He is really a very nice man; and his being a 'gentleman' goes a great way with Margaret. She is really quite ambitious, but I think Alice is the very contrary." Mrs. Cormack, as she spoke, turned her eyes towards the ivy-clad farm-house at the foot of the mountain, which at one time seemed to look down almost scornfully upon Ned Cormack's humble roof-tree, but never appeared homely, even compared with the modern mansion that had taken the place of the old thatched house. And Martin Dwyer's farm-house had a great charm for Mrs. Cormack. She often walked with Nannie and Nellie in the orchard on summer evenings when the trees were in blossom, and liked to sit upon Mr. Armstrong's rustic seat and contemplate her own handsome residence, which year by year was growing into greener beauty, and putting off by degrees that look of bareness which at first displeased her; the while her two graceful daughters walked up and down by the hazels on the river bank. And when Terry Hanrahan, the apple-man, had taken up his abode in the orchard house, and the eve apples and queenings were ripe, Mrs. Cormack always came herself to make purchases and pluck the fruit with her own hand. And this she continued to do up to November-eve, when, assisted by Tom Dwyer, she selected the winter supply, taking all the Nonpareilles—the right name of which Terry Hanrahan took pains to assure her was "Moss umberells."

Yes, Mrs. Cormack liked that old orchard; and had a great liking also for young Tom Dwyer. Perhaps that was why she looked towards the orchard just now when she remarked that her younger daughter was not ambitious like her sister. It used to annoy her to see how little either of them seemed to appreciate Tom Dwyer.

"Did you ever think of Tom Dwyer at all?" she asked turning to her husband, who was watching little Eddy driving the young ass away from the flowers.

"I used to think of it," he replied. "His aunt would have liked it so much. And it would be pleasant to have Margaret settled so near us. But there's no use of thinking of it now. The place is not fit for her."

"It would be easy to make it fit for anybody," she replied.

"Yes, if you only mean the house. But how would it be with the family?" he asked.

"That's true," Mrs. Cormack replied with a shake of her head; "I fear she could never get on with his mother. But if it was not for that, and if she really liked Tom, something tells me she'd be happier as his wife than she would be with any man I know. Don't you think there is something above the common in him?"

"He has stuff in him if he got a fair chance," Ned Cormack replied. "I'd be glad to give him a helping hand if I saw any way of serving him." Ned Cormack was not only considered "lucky" himself, but the cause of luck in others as well. It was remarked that the man he helped was always sure to prosper. But it was only a knowing few who were able to see that the help was only given to those who possessed the qualities that made success almost a certainty. "Why wouldn't you ask Ned Cormack to secure you, and get a hundred pounds from the bank, as he got for Dick Shea?" Mrs. Dwyer persisted for a long time in dinning into her husband's ears—till at last Martin gave way and made the request.

"No, Martin," said Ned Cormack firmly, "I'd be glad to serve you if I could. But, take my word for it, I'd be only injuring you if I did what you ask me."

Poor Martin Dwyer couldn't see the matter in this light at all, and returned home thinking very hardly of his neighbour, who would be "leaving it all behind him" some day.

Mrs. Cormack was then very glad to hear her husband

say that he would wish to give Tom Dwyer a helping hand. It was a proof to her that Tom possessed worldly prudence in addition to the other good qualities with which she herself had always credited him.

"I declare," said her husband, observing the bright, animated expression of her face at the moment, "you look as young as ever you did. I am not surprised that strangers take you for your daughter's sister. I must take care of myself, or you will be a formidable rival to them. I'd bet my life Tom Dwyer would prefer you to Margaret. But what do you really think about O'Keeffe?"

Before replying, she took a field-glass from the table and going to the window directed it towards the mountain.

"Yes," she remarked, "I guessed it was Tom. He is leaning against Corrigdhoun. He seems to be rather given to loitering about lately. I thought you might have set him down as an idler, and was rather surprised at what you have just said about him."

"He does all he has to do that is worth doing," returned her husband. "He requires a motive for exertion. But he really does more than many young fellows I know, who make a great show of industry. I have often watched him doing two men's work, and yet when he'd stroll over to the bridge after, you'd think by him that he had spent the day rambling about. I'd like to see him get a fair start."

"Ah!" his wife replied with an unconscious sigh, "there is more in Tom Dwyer than you think." But lowering the glass, she added somewhat absently, as if she wished to change the subject, "I see Mr. Armstrong with the two children in the orchard; I am really very glad to see him able to fish again. I hope he will come over by-and-bye. There is Alice singing one of his songs. I sometimes think she is fairly in love with him. She does not seem to care about the society of young men. But she always brightens up when she sees Mr. Armstrong or Father Feehan."

"I think she is very like her poor aunt Aileen in many ways," said Mr. Cormack thoughtfully; "you must be careful of her health."

"Oh, she is quite strong now," was the rather hastily uttered reply.

"She seems to be quite unlike Margaret," the father observed. "She'll probably be a nun."

"You asked me what I thought of Mr. O'Keeffe," Mrs. Cormack remarked, turning from the window and replacing the field glass on the table. "I confess I am beginning to feel uneasy. People will talk—but that's not what I care most about. If Margaret really liked him, and if you were opposed to the match, I'd be very anxious about the result."

"You don't mean," said her husband, smiling, "that Margaret is the sort of girl that would pine away and die of a broken heart?"

"No, indeed," she replied. "Perhaps, I'd rather she was. But I fear that Mr. O'Keeffe is not over scrupulous."

"Do you mean to suggest that she might elope?" her husband interrupted in evident astonishment.

"Well, not quite so bad as that," she rejoined. "But things might turn out very unpleasantly if she set her heart upon marrying him, and if you refused to give whatever fortune he required."

"Oh, nonsense," returned Ned Cormack, rising and buttoning his coat across his chest. "I'll probably be able to come at what he means to-night. Hillo! Eddy! Get your hat till we go and see the young lambs."

"Don't forget that Father Feehan and Mr. O'Keeffe are to be here early," said Mrs. Cormack as her husband passed the window. Ned Cormack replied merely by a nod, as, holding his son by the hand, he murmured to himself—

"My little boy! My little boy!" in tones of the deepest tenderness.

CHAPTER VI.

SAMMY SLOAN IN THE PRIEST'S SHRUBBERY—THE COOPER'S WORKSHOP—RODY FLYNN AND HIS MELANCHOLY CRONY—HOW PADDY SHANNAHAN DEFEATED HAMMY COSGROVE OUT OF HIS OWN BIBLE—THE REPEAL WARDEN AND COUNSELLOR DOHENY'S SPEECH—MR. ROBERT O'KEEFFE DESIRES JOE COONEY TO BRING HIS HORSE TO THE FORGE, WHICH COMPELS THE BAILIFF TO ALTER HIS PLANS.

It was known all over the village of Shannaclough that the Hon Horatio himself had called upon Father Feehan the night before, accompanied by a tall gentleman with a long nose. It was further ascertained that after a discussion of nearly three hours' duration between the parish priest and his two visitors—during which the embryo legislator shed tears and talked of his "poor mamma"—the long-nosed gentleman filled cheques to pay expenses and so forth, and the Hon Horatio consented to repress his honourable ambition to "elevate himself and his country together," until the general election, which Father Feehan, with an affectionate clasp of the hand, assured him was nearer than many people imagined. Father Clancy, the curate, remarked at breakfast that the youthful aspirant for parliamentary laurels would do well to employ the interval in the cultivation of "Lindley Murray," and a beard, a remark which, fortunately for the curate, Mrs. Slattery, the housekeeper,

thought was intended as friendly and complimentary to the scion of the house of Allavogga, who had shaken hands with her very civilly and respectfully, when taking his leave the night before. All this, by some mysterious agency, had been spread over the whole parish at an early hour in the forenoon. We know how the news was received by Martin Dwyer, of Corrigea, and his wealthy neighbour, Mr. Cormack, of Rockview House. There was gladness among the enfranchised everywhere; and, to a great extent, the non-electors sympathised with their "free and independent" neighbours. The owners of the two public-houses looked sullen; but even they could not help feeling the influence of the general sunshine more or less. In fact the only really discontented person in Shannaclough that morning was Sammy Sloane, the bailiff, who had been conditionally retained in the Tory interest, and counted upon making a good thing out of the election.

Unlike the two publicans, however, Sammy Sloane wore a cheerful and comfortable look, as with his stick under his arm, he was seen to walk quickly through the street, and, somewhat to the surprise of Rody Flynn, the cooper, turn into the priest's gate, which was but a short distance outside the village. The bailiff noiselessly opened the gate, observing that the key had been left in the padlock, which was locked round one of the bars. He glanced furtively up the avenue, which was quite overhung by trees, whose thick foliage almost completely shut out the sky. With a laughing expression in his really good-humoured face, the little bailiff walked quickly across the enclosure—half field, half shrubbery—on the right hand side of the avenue, till he came to a fine lilac in full blossom close to the high ivied garden wall. Sammy Sloane put up his hand as if to pull a sprig of the lilac, looking furtively in every direction to see if anyone was observing him. Mr. Sloane was a man of taste, and his getting a nosegay to bring home to his wife and children would have caused no surprise whatever; though, possibly Father Feehan might say it was

like Sammy Sloane's audacity to come into his shrubbery uninvited and help himself to his lilacs.

Mr. Sloane, however, did *not* help himself to a single sprig of the priest's lilac because it happened that Father Feehan or anybody else was *not* looking at him. His real business in the priest's shrubbery this morning was not to get a nosegay for his wife, though that would have done very well as a reason for his being there—if occasion required it. He sat down behind a holly bush, against the ivied garden wall, and, stretching out his short, stout legs, took off his hat and placed it between them. Taking a roll of papers from his breast-pocket, which was very deep, Mr. Sloane selected two from the lot, and returned the rest to his pocket.

"Well," said Sammy Sloane to himself in an argumentative sort of way, "if they let the election go on I could put them off for another six months. But people must live. And he is not a bit thankful to me for sparing him so long. Now, if that was Murty Magrath had these," he added, running his eyes over the contents of the two documents, in a way from which it could be seen that Mr. Sloane was rather short-sighted—"If Murty had these, 'tis long ago it would be done, unless he was squared, I don't think that a good system. There's more lost than gained by it in the end. When a man gets the name of taking a bribe he'll lose many a good job. Honesty is the best policy—and to do things quiet."

In this virtuous frame of mind Mr. Sammy Sloane reclined at full length by the garden wall, resting his head against the ivy, and seeming to take great interest in the movements of a pair of golden wrens among the branches of the fir tree, against the trunk of which he had placed his feet, the heel of one resting upon the toe of the other. While the bailiff was watching the busy little wrens with his half-shut, short-sighted eyes, Mr. Robert O'Keeffe was slowly riding through the village, stroking the neck of his handsome bay horse with his gloved hand, and followed by many admiring eyes, till he reached the priest's gate, which he opened without

dismounting, and was lost to all eyes in the shady avenue, save the half-shut ones that glanced for a moment from the golden wrens, as the rider passed from the sunlight into the twilight under the trees. Among the admiring eyes that followed the horseman as he rode through the village were two small, round black ones that belonged to Rody Flynn, the cooper, who, resting upon his drawing knife, and pushing his brown paper cap back upon the poll of his round close-cropped head, exclaimed delightedly—

“He’s a mighty handsome man. I never *seen* a purtier man, except one gentleman I was *acquainted* with in the—*Queen’s County*.” Rody Flynn emphasised his words in a manner peculiar to himself, making a rhetorical pause before the emphatic expression, as if it had been trying to run away from him, and he had to catch it, and drive it with some force into its proper place with a jerk. And here let us confess, that with all due respect for Rody Flynn, it is to this day an undecided question in our mind whether he did not sometimes—in fact often and habitually—draw upon his imagination in reference to what he had seen and known in the *Queen’s County*. No matter what the subject under discussion might be—no matter what the harrowing accident by flood or field related—no matter how enormous the potato or turnip brought in for exhibition by the Scotch steward at the Castle—Rody Flynn had seen something more extraordinary “in the *Queen’s County*.”

This is a sore subject with us. We quite entered into the feelings of our old friend Father Walter Cleary (peace be with him) when one day, having found Rody Flynn shaving the head of a poor man in typhus fever, to whom Father Walter had been called to administer the Sacrament—he said to us—“what an admirable character that Rody Flynn is. He’s always doing work of charity; his house is like a dispensary, and he’s really very skilful. And there he is now after shaving that poor man’s head, not deterred by the danger, though he knows there is danger. I’d rather than fifty pounds,” he

continued, "that Rody Flynn didn't see so many things in the Queen's County. But I suppose," Father Walter added with a sigh of resignation, "there's no use in looking for perfection in this world."

It was Father Walter first gave the name of "Dicky Sheil" to Rody Flynn's canary, whose shrill volubility cowed even Terry Hanrahan's thrush into silence, and sometimes drove Tom Doherty's flute-throated blackbird into fits of temporary insanity. But Rody Flynn had seen one better singing bird even than his own Dicky Sheil, "in the Queen's County."

"Did you ever hear Sheil?" Father Walter asked indignantly, as if he thought Rody meant to disparage not the canary, but the brilliant Richard Lalor himself."

"I did," Rody replied, his little eyes sparkling with delight.

"In the Queen's County, I suppose," muttered Father Walter with something like a scowl.

"No, in Clonmel," returned Rody Flynn triumphantly. "The time of General Matthew's election."

"Tell me something he said?" rejoined Father Walter, dubiously.

"'Twas the last day of the polling," Rody replied, laying down his mallet, and pushing his paper cap back from his forehead. "He was speaking from the balcony of Hearn's Hotel. He was about my own size," added Rody Flynn, looking upon his shapely legs encased in a well-fitting corduroy breeches, and light grey angola stockings, and then drawing himself up to his full height.

"Tell us something he said," Father Walter interrupted, almost morosely.

"The polling was coming to a close," Rody Flynn went on, his round face radiant at the recollection of that exciting contest, when the "Gallant Forties"—so soon, alas! to be flung away like broken tools—trooped to the poll in the teeth of more deadly peril than soldier ever encountered upon the battle field. "The polling was coming to a close; and it was known we had a successful majority. As Sheil was speaking, a big—*Orange* flag

was—*hoisted* over the—*club-house*. ‘They’re beat, they’re beat, says Sheil,’ I see they have hung out an Orange pocket handkerchief there beyond. Oh, friends, it is bedewed with many an orange tear.”

“You did hear Sheil” said Father Walter, fixing his eyes upon Rody Flynn, as if he would look through and through him, and satisfy himself as to the reality or otherwise of those Queen’s County experiences, which he regarded as the one shadow upon Rody Flynn’s character.

“Yes,” said Rody, “and Doheny spoke after, and told the people not to mind Orange or Green, or any colour, but to stand by their country and their religion.”

“Don’t talk about Doheny,” said Father Walter.

“He was the honestest man of ’em all,” retorted Rody Flynn, stoutly, “Sheil was a—brilliant senator, as you say. He was a great man, too, while he stuck to O’Connell. But, after all, what was he but a—place-hunter?”

Father Walter felt the force of this, and was silent for a minute or two, of which “Dicky Sheil” took advantage to hurl a thrilling defiance at Tom Doherty’s blackbird, who immediately dropped cowering from his perch as if a hawk were poised above his head, and then fluttered round and round his wicker prison uttering discordant cries, and apparently bent upon dashing himself to pieces.

“Well, here,” said Father Walter, as if posed by Rody’s last remark. “Do these razors, and come up early to-morrow to shave me. But don’t bother me about Doheny. And don’t tell me you have heard a better singing bird than “Dicky Sheil”—in the Queen’s County, or in any other county, for I don’t believe a word of it.”

“‘Tis surprising,” said Rody Flynn, when the priest had turned away from the door at which he had merely stopped on his way to the chapel, to leave his razors to be set. “‘Tis surprising how—prejudiced they are against Doheny.”

“I remarked that,” returned his melancholy-faced friend and crony, Davy Lacy, the shoemaker, who, with

his long-tailed body-coat hanging loosely over his shoulders, leant upon the half-door, his lack-lustre eyes fixed upon the top of a poplar tree behind Mr. Amby Armstrong's house. That tree seemed to possess some extraordinary fascination for Davy Lacy. He was leaning over Rody Flynn's half-door one calm summer evening when the first fluttering leaf of the poplar that peeped above the red tiles of the quaint old house caught his eye, and while he was puzzling his brains to guess whether that fluttering little object was a bird or what else it might be—Nell, the cobbler, rushed down the street excitedly, and announced to Davy Lacy that a son and heir had just been born to him. Ever after Davy Lacy seemed to recognise some mysterious connection between that tree and his first-born, whom he invariably spoke of as "that lad of mine"—and watched its growth with an interest that seemed to have no small share of awe and wonder mingled with it, as, year after year, the poplar tree rose higher and higher over the red tiles. When he took part in the conversation in Rody Flynn's workshop—which was but seldom and abruptly—Davy Lacy seemed to address himself to the top of the poplar tree. Whenever he did take his bony hand from his lank cheek, and his shirt sleeves from the half-door, it was to fix a questioning and reproachful stare upon somebody; and the stare was all the more intensely melancholy as well as questioning and reproachful when he himself had said, or was about to say, something very amusing.

The contrast between the good-humoured, plump, and rounded little cooper, and the lean angular, and sad-faced shoemaker, was very striking. Yet there must have been some bond of sympathy that drew them to each other. Davy appeared to spend nearly all his unemployed hours resting upon Rody's half-door; and Rody's chubby face always brightened up when his melancholy friend appeared hitching his blue body-coat—into the sleeves of which he never put his arms except on Sundays—upon his shoulders, and silently took up his

position with his elbow upon the half-door, and his hand under his chin.

"Sure I remember," said Davy Lacy, in reply to Rody Flynn's last remark, and appearing to address himself, not to Rody, but to the poplar tree—"I remember that speech Mr. Sweeny read that made John Nowlan rush out of the door here, and knock down that lad o' mine, who came to call me home to take Mr. Dwyer's measure. He was so ragin' mad he didn't mind the boy, though I thought every bone in his body was broke."

"I remember," returned Rody Flynn, laughing, "I told that story to Mr. Armstrong while I was shaving him the evening after, and he laughed heartily. He said it showed how much people are influenced by prejudice." Rody Flynn had a habit of giving the *ipsissima verba* of those he quoted, which possibly may account for the rather long pauses in unusual places in his sentences, and the unexpected emphasis upon words to which we have before referred. "Mr. Armstrong said it was a most—amusing instance of the—powerful influence that prejudice—exercises over men's—judgment. I knew another instance of the same kind," said Rody Flynn, "in the Queen's County."

"That lad o' mine had reason to remember it," Davy Lacy interrupted, turning round and fixing a severely reproachful glance upon his friend's beaming countenance. Rody, however, on this occasion contented himself with a silent and inward enjoyment of the "other instance" in the Queen's County. At least we hope so. We earnestly hope that "other instance" did come under Rody Flynn's notice in the Queen's County or somewhere else, and that keeping the fun all to himself was not the result of any temporary derangement of the inventive faculty. But while Rody Flynn, to the apparent astonishment and disgust of the melancholy shoemaker, is chuckling over what happened (we hope) in the Queen's County, we shall tell the story about Counsellor Doheny's speech, which

story Mr. Armstrong—who since we left him has had a “good time” with Nannie and Nellie in the orchard, quite unconscious of Mrs. Cormack’s binocular—considered so amusing that Rody Flynn thought more than once it would be necessary to let the lather dry on his left cheek, certain muscles of which became so unruly that there seemed to be danger in passing the well-stropped razor over them.

The cooper’s workshop, you must know, was the favourite resort of the wise and the witty of Shannacloagh, who might be seen wending their way thither of an evening to smoke their pipes and discuss political and other topics—generally in an amicable spirit; except when Tom M’Mahon ventured to assert certain claims of direct descent from the victor of Clontarf, which was sure to raise the anger of Stephen O’Brien to such a pitch that Davy Lacy, whose disposition was pacific, was often seen to turn from his contemplation of the poplar tree in Mr. Armstrong’s garden, and quietly put the adze and all other dangerous weapons out of the reach of the disputants; and “Dicky Sheil” would sidle close to the wires of his cage, and look down in perplexity and fear. To be sure, religious discussions were not unknown at one time in Rody Flynn’s workshop. But happily that time was past and gone. Poor old Hammy Cosgrove, the sexton, stoutly carried on the war, though his supporters had dropped off one by one, till he was left to fight the battle of the Church, as by law established, alone amid a host of foes—not shrinking to meet even the formidable Paddy Shannahan, who had “Ward’s Cantos” and “Cobbet’s History of the Reformation” at the tips of his fingers. But one day the old sexton, taking the “authorised version” from the tail pocket of his rusty black coat, was nervously opening it with a view to utterly demolishing his opponents with a text, when Paddy Shannahan, laying his finger upon the page, said in a severe tone—
“Read that.”

“St. Paul to the Romans.” Hammy Cosgrove read,

turning his eyes from the book, and fixing them in surprise upon Paddy Shannahan's face, in every lineament of which "victory" complete and decisive was as clearly legible as were the words to which his index finger continued to point.

"St. Paul to the Romans," Hammy Cosgrove repeated in a more subdued tone, still wondering what Paddy Shannahan could make of the words, but with a vague presentment of disaster.

"St. Paul to the *Romans*," rejoined Paddy Shannahan, slowly and impressively. "And will you show me St. Paul to the *Protestants*?" And Paddy Shannahan, drawing himself up to his full height, and folding his arms across his chest, paused for a reply.

There was no reply. Hammy Cosgrove closed his Bible with trembling hands, and retreated backwards into the street. He took to his bed for a month, and was "never the same after," his wife used to say. After this, "arguing religion" was a thing of the past in Shannaclough; and Paddy Shannahan, who at one time was perhaps the most important person in the parish, would have fallen into comparative obscurity, had he not become the possessor of a certain book which treated of the identity of Antichrist, the knowledge derived from which made him, if not a more popular, certainly a more feared and revered character even than he was when the sight of his red-brown wig made scripture readers hide their diminished heads.

Yet the attendance in Rody Flynn's workshop was sure to be unusually numerous whenever Mr. Sweeny, the schoolmaster, was observed to walk straight over the bridge, without taking note of the crowd of unruly urchins in the waste space known as "Bully's Acre" (with a view to "hoistings" on the morrow), and forgetting to enquire how old Mrs. Ryan's "pains were that evening." When this happened, and Mr. Sweeny hurried on, looking straight before him, with his hands under his coat tails, which jerked up and down curiously as he descended the incline of the bridge, forgetting in his

eagerness that he was going down a hill; then it was known that there was "something in the paper"—which paper the bobbing up and down of the coat tails revealed to all beholders, and forthwith there was a general movement towards Rody Flynn's. Rody's pretty daughter, Julia, hurried out from the kitchen on these occasions with a chair for the schoolmaster—a compliment paid to no other visitor except to Mr. Ambrose Armstrong—and Mr. Sweeny, in order to give the audience time to assemble, would repress his eagerness, even to the extent of taking a few whiffs from Rody Flynn's pipe, specially lit for him, before putting on his brass-rimmed spectacles and unfolding the newspaper.

Leading articles, and didactic utterances in general, were very trying to Rody Flynn, who, after conscientiously listening to them from beginning to end, and allowing reasonable time for comment or criticism, would tell the reader to "come to the news of the week." And Rody's round face was not the only face that brightened with awakened interest and relaxation, from strained mental effort, when Mr. Sweeny did come to the "news of the week," in which there was always sure to be an item that reminded Rody Flynn of something he had seen "in the Queen's County." Indeed the experience in the Queen's County was looked upon quite as much as a matter of course after the "news of the week," as was Mr. Sweeny's taking off his brass-rimmed spectacles, and wiping his eyes with his blue pocket-handkerchief. But we have not yet told the story about Councillor Doheny's speech. It was when the Old and Young Ireland controversy was at its highest and angriest. Mr. Sweeny had just commenced the reading of a speech, when Davy Lacy was interrupted in his contemplation of the top of the poplar tree—only about the size of his hand of which had at that time appeared above the tiles, and that "lad of his" still got over the threshold on all-fours—by the half-door being rudely pushed in. It was the ultra O'Connellite,

John Nowlan, who, as became a "Repeal Warden" and an apostle of "moral force," was aggressive, and scowled, as he pushed his way in, at Mick Conway, the slater, who was an open supporter of the "advanced" party. Mr. Sweeny went on reading the speech as if nothing had happened, and John Nowlan was soon caught and carried away by the vigour and beauty of its eloquence.

"Who made that speech?" John Nowlan asked when Mr. Sweeny had come to "loud and long-continued applause," and laid the newspaper upon his knees, glancing upwards over the rims of his spectacles at Dicky Sheil, who seemed to have waited for the right moment to pour out a little cataract of ear-piercing melody.

"Who made that speech?" the Repeal Warden repeated.

"Counsellor Doo-hee-ny," Mick Conway answered, winking at the schoolmaster, who replied with another wink, and turned his attention again to Dicky Sheil, who had his ear cocked to catch any note of despair that Terry Hanrahan's thrush or Tom Doherty's blackbird might dare to send back to his challenge.

"Counsellor Doo-hee-ny," mused John Nowlan. "Who is Counsellor Doo-hee-ny? I never heard of Counsellor Doo-hee-ny. Read that speech again."

Mr. Sweeny complied.

"That's the best speech I ever heard," exclaimed John Nowlan the Repeal Warden. "But how is it I never heard of this Counsellor Doo-hee-ny before? Read that passage again, where he speaks of 'the ruined homesteads of Tipperary.'"

Mr. Sweeny read the passage.

"O'Connell never made such a speech," exclaimed the Repeal Warden. "But who is this Counsellor Doo-hee-ny? Whoever he is he is the greatest orator in Ireland."

Mr. Sweeny raised the newspaper to his nose, and laughed behind it, while Rody Flynn had to lay down the razor with which he was shaving one of the neighbours, and hold his sides.

"Who can this Doo-hee-ny be?" muttered the

Repeal Warden, unconscious of their mirth, and not even observing that David Lacy had turned round and fixed a glance of intensely sorrowful and wounding reproach upon him.

"Don't you know your old friend Counsellor Dogh-eny?" Mick Conway, the Young Irishman asked.

"Curse him, he never made a speech!" shouted John Nowlan savagely, pulling open the door and upsetting Davy Lacy's son and heir upon the pavement, and viciously kicking Rody Flynn's dog, Tip, whose very placidity as he sat dozingly watching a cluster of busy gnats that whirled and danced not many inches above his nose, seemed to aggravate the anger of the exasperated Repeal Warden, who for eighteen months afterwards was never seen to cross Rody Flynn's threshold. But John Nowlan soon after got his auger converted into a pike-head, and did other inconsistent things, for which he was "in the black books" with Father Feehan till the day of his death.

But these things happened several years before this breezy morning in May, when Rody Flynn pronounced Mr. Robert O'Keeffe, as he rode by upon his handsome bay horse, the "purtiest" man he ever "seen," with the inevitable exception of the one "gentleman" in the Queen's County, and Mr. O'Keeffe, as he stroked his horse's neck with his gloved hand, did not fail to observe that the little white curtain of the window next the workshop was drawn aside, and that Julia Flynn's violet eyes peeped at him from behind the great scarlet geranium—a slip from the magnificent one in the glass porch of Rockview House, presented to Julia by her friend, Miss Alice Cormack. When the handsome horseman had passed, Julia ran out to the workshop, and, standing at the door, gazed after him with her soft eyes—so different from her father's small round black ones—and said in a pensive sort of way, as if she could envy the winner of such a prize—

"Well, they'll be the handsomest couple in all Ireland, if there was fifty Queen's Counties in it."

Mr. O'Keeffe reined in his horse at the steps of the priest's hall door and dismounted. This seemed to surprise the bailiff, who gave over admiring his stout little calves, comfortably encased in ribbed woollen stockings, and raised himself upon his elbow to listen.

"I thought he'd ride to the stable," he muttered, in a purring whisper, "and that I could slip away without being seen."

"Take him to the forge," he heard Mr. O'Keeffe say, "and get this shoe fastened. Don't be long, Joe, as I have no time to lose."

"All right, sir," the priest's boy, Joe Cooney, replied. "I'll just run to the coachhouse for the harness winkers, as I want to get a stitch in it."

"I'm afraid," mused Mr. Sammy Sloane, "they might get up a row at the forge, and I always like to do things quiet. I'll run off, and maybe I could get Joe to come into Nick Martin's and have a tumbler of porter, and I might be able to give him the slip."

Sammy Sloane trotted across the enclosure, which we have described as half field and half shrubbery, till he came to the avenue gate, when he paused suddenly, with the forefinger of his left hand laid along the side of his nose.

"There's no harm in trying it," said he in his purring whisper, with a twinkle in his greenish-grey eye. He took the padlock from the bar, and turning the hasp, locked the gate in the usual way, and put the key into his waistcoat pocket. He had only time to get over the stile, and stoop down near the wall outside, under pretence of tying the string of his boot, when Joe Cooney came down the avenue leading Mr. O'Keeffe's horse, and whistling "The Unfortunate Rake," to the concluding bars of which melody—suddenly changing the whistle to a song—he sang, in a not unmusical voice, and with a suggestive tenderness of look and intonation of the words—

"Arise, bonnie lassie, we'll bundle and go."

"Who the divil locked the gate?" Joe exclaimed, giving

a pull to the lock. "I suppose it must be Mrs. Slattery to vex Father Clancy. 'Tis surprising what plans women have when they want to vex a man. None of us could stand her if we didn't praise her. She'd stand on her head for you if you praised her. But Father Clancy never praises any wan. I must tell her that he said she was the best woman in Ireland—or some other lie—or she'll set the poor man out of his sinses." And Joe Cooney hung the rein on the gate, and hurried back to get the key from the housekeeper, and pay her compliments, we are sorry to say, equally extravagant and insincere.

CHAPTER VII.

MR. O'KEEFFE'S HORSE DISAPPEARS MYSTERIOUSLY—
SAMMY SLOANE PAYS A SECOND VISIT TO THE SHRUB-
BERRY AND PULS A NOSEGAY THIS TIME—HE WARNS
HIS SON AGAINST ALLOWING HIMSELF TO BE INFLUENCED
BY PERSONAL FEELING IN THE DISCHARGE OF HIS
PROFESSIONAL DUTIES, AND HOPES THAT MURTY
MAGRATH WILL NOT HEAR OF WHAT OCCURRED.

“WHAT’S the matter with Joe?” Father Feehan asked
a few minutes afterwards.

“I sent him to the forge with my horse,” Mr. O’Keeffe
replied. “This collared head is capital, Mrs. Slattery—
no one can equal you at a collared head—but I’ll try a
leg of that fowl; it looks so tempting. Your fowl are
the plumpest and the tenderest and the best cooked I
can meet anywhere. And my friend, the Hon. Horatio
Mulligan, made the same remark to me last night. We
must put him in for the county, and no mistake, at the
next election. The sherry, thank you, Mrs. Slattery.
By the way, Father Clancy does not seem to be
at all a warm supporter of the Honourable Horatio.
But we must bring him round before the general
election.”

A scowl suddenly darkened the hard and ruddy and—
during Mr. O’Keeffe’s previous remarks—radiant face
of the housekeeper, who proceeded to remove the tray,
while Mr. O’Keeffe filliped a little bread-crumble from his
vest, displaying his ring and white hand to the best
advantage.

"What is the matter with Joe?" the priest, who was standing at the window, again asked.

"He thought I had the key of the gate, whatever put it into his head," replied the housekeeper, standing with the tray between her hands in the doorway, which she pretty well filled up, so that Mr. O'Keeffe went near sending the glasses and decanter flying about the hall in endeavouring to pass her. He had caught a glimpse of Joe Cooney through the window, looking wildly about him, and, with some vague fears for his new saddle, Mr. O'Keeffe hurried out to question Joe as to what had happened. That something very extraordinary must have happened was evident enough from Joe's bewildered and frightened stare.

"The Lord save us!" exclaimed Joe, "unless the ground swallowed him, I don't know what must have become of him."

"What do you mean?" Mr. O'Keeffe asked angrily through his clenched white teeth, while the delicate pink and white of his smooth face flushed crimson.

"The gate was locked, sir," Joe Cooney replied—too much amazed to notice his questioner's anger; "and I hung the saddle on the gate while I was running up for the key. An' when I came back in two minutes after I hadn't tale or tidens of him."

Mr. O'Keeffe hurried to the avenue gate which, to his surprise, was locked. But on casting his eyes upon the ground he caught sight of the key, which seemed to have accidentally dropped from the lock.

Joe Cooney picked up the key and opened the gate, with a vague notion that the horse might be outside on the road.

"Did you try the stable and the kitchen garden?" inquired Father Feehan, who had come out on learning that the horse had disappeared.

"I tried every hole and corner, sir," returned Joe, whose amazement showed no symptoms of subsiding.

Father Clancy rode slowly through the open gate, upon his grey mare, with that satirical twinkle in his eye, of which Mr. Robert O'Keeffe stood a little in dread.

"What's the matter?" the curate asked, tightening the rein, and tapping his toe with his hazel switch, looking as if he knew beforehand what the reply would be, which Mr. O'Keeffe seemed in no hurry to give.

"This bosthoon," he answered angrily at last, "he's let my horse break away, and does not know where he is."

"Oh, he's quite safe," returned the curate.

"Where?" Mr. Robert O'Keeffe asked in surprise.

"In the Pound," Father Clancy replied, with his dry laugh. "At least I think so, for I saw Sammy Sloane leading him up Croobeen-lane."

It was pale Mr. Robert O'Keeffe turned now; and, if it were not for the presence of the two priests, that clenched white hand would in all likelihood have come into contact (unless parried) with Joe Cooney's visage, which looked rueful and penitent enough at the moment to submit to any amount of ill-usage with resignation.

"Why do you allow such a thing to happen?" Father Feehan asked, with a displeased look, but in a tone that could only be heard by his nephew himself. "I spoke to you about that before."

"I knew he had one or two decrees for small amounts," was the reply. "But I never thought the fellow would seize my horse. 'Tis very vexatious just now; for I suppose it will spread about like wild-fire."

"The sooner you settle about it the better, then," suggested Father Feehan. "Go down to Mr. Armstrong and tell him I'll feel obliged if he would come up for a few minutes," said Mr. O'Keeffe, turning to Joe Cooney, who seemed to be plucking up spirit, as he reflected that Sammy Sloane could have seized the horse just as easily at the forge.

"He's gone to fish, sir," exclaimed Joe Cooney, suddenly, after having gone some yards beyond the gate. "I saw him in the morning with his basket on his shoulder talking to Rody Flynn."

"Well, tell Rody to come up to me," said Mr. O'Keeffe, sharply. Joe started off again; but again paused, with

his eyes upon the ground—looking very serious for a moment, and then smiling and blushing with a sheepishly guilty expression of countenance.

"I'll run up for the winkers. There's a buckle loose in them," said Joe, glancing irresolutely towards his master, as if he feared Mr. O'Keeffe might offer some objection to the delay. Instead of returning through the avenue, Joe Cooney went to the trouble of climbing over the wall at the corner of the garden, with the harness winkers hanging upon his arm, and a magnificent bunch of lilac in his left hand, which he held while passing by the gate, so that the gentlemen in the avenue might not see it. It may as well be confessed at once, that the harness winkers was a mere pretence, and the bunch of lilac the real cause of his turning back, when he got the order to go for Rody Flynn, as the best substitute for Mr. Ambrose Armstrong.

Joe walked hurriedly, till he came within a few yards of the cooper's cottage-like thatched house, but dropped into a slow, careless lounge, as he passed the little red wooden gate of the yard, in which Mr. Cormack's car (covered on the outside according to the weather), was put up on Sunday during the mass, and turned, as if something at the opposite side of the street had suddenly attracted his attention, on coming to the window with the white curtain and the scarlet geranium.

"God save all here!" said Joe Cooney, laying his hand on the half-door, and looking like a young man who was weary of a world in which he could find nothing to interest him.

"God save you kindly, Joe!" was the cheery response, accompanied by a look suggestive of complete unconsciousness of care or trouble. "Have you any news?"

"Not a word," Joe replied, "except that Mr. Robert wants you in a great hurry. Sammy Sloane. Oh! be the hokey," he broke off, "spake av the ould boy an' he'll appear." And Joe turned round and stared at the podgy little bailiff, who was hurrying up the street, trying to walk as fast as his short, stumpy legs would

allow, but breaking into intermittent trots, in spite of himself, cocking up the toes of his thick half-boots, as if he wanted to exhibit the nails in the soles, and looking very flushed and excited. On catching a glimpse of the bunch of lilac, Mr. Sloane stopped suddenly, and approaching Joe Cooney, took the liberty of laying his hand upon Joe's arm, and stooping down, inhaled the odour of the blossoms, as if he found the temptation quite irresistible.

"They're charming" said Mr. Sloane. "I wish I had a bunch like that to bring home to my wife. Where did you get them, Joe?" And Sammy Sloane looked coaxingly, but at the same time suspiciously, into the, at that moment, rather glum and surprised face of the "priest's boy."

"I noticed that fine lilac tree in Father Feehan's shrubbery. Was it from that you pulled them, Joe?" And Sammy Sloane put his nose to the lilacs again, keeping his left eye fixed upon Joe Cooney's face, who replied gruffly enough that it was from the tree in the shrubbery he got them.

"Good morning," said the little bailiff, looking reassured, but still suspicious, into Joe Cooney's freckled countenance, and resuming his alternating trotting and walking up the street, taking off his hat and wiping the perspiration from his forehead as he approached the priest's gate, and muttering to himself, "Joe has not found them, I think."

"He's after puttin' Mr. Roberts horse into the Pound," said Joe, resuming the conversation with the cooper.

Rody Flynn raised his eyebrows and shrugged his shoulders; but, from the twinkle of his black eye and the smile that lit up his chubby face, it was plain that Rody was rather amused than otherwise by the intelligence.

"He's takin' after the father and the grandfather," said Rody laughing. "The bailiffs were always huntin' 'em. But I thought young Robert was too 'cute to let himself be exposed. Times are different now from what they

used to be. I remember when 'tis proud a man 'ud be to have a writ or a decree out against him. But that's all changed; I'm surprised at young Robert."

"That reminds me," Joe Cooney remarked, putting his hand into his coat-pocket, "that I picked up these papers when I was pullin' the laylac. Be the hokey!" he continued, as he unfolded them, "as sure as you're born they're Whereases. Yes, they're to-wits, and no mistake," Joe went on, "an' Mr. Robert's name wud five round O's to the two uv 'em."

Rody Flynn laughed till he could scarcely find breath to call out, "Julia, bring me my hat an' coat."

"Good morrow, Joe," said pretty Julia Flynn, with a laugh in the corner of her eye as she glanced at the flowers, while handing the coat and hat to her father.

Joe's only reply to the salutation was presenting the bunch of lilac as if he were taking aim at her with a pistol.

"Oh, thank you, Joe; they are beautiful. I'll put them in water and they'll keep fresh for ever so long."

"Give me the decrees," said Rody Flynn, "an' let us go down to the Pound first. 'Tis a capital joke if Sammy is caught." And Rody, thrusting his hands into the side pockets of his coat, walked down the street and over the bridge with a lightness in step and a roll in his gait which made Julia remark that her father was getting young again.

The horse was not in the Pound. Jacky, the cobbler, was holding him in the lane, for which service Jacky had got one penny from Sammy Sloane, and was promised another.

"Take him away," said Rody Flynn.

"Might I bring him to the forge?" Joe Cooney asked.

"Yes," Rody answered, "an' I'll go up and see what's to be done. If there be any talk at the forge say it was all a mistake, an' don't give them any more information."

"You forgot to put in the horse," said Rody Flynn laughing, on meeting Mr. Sloane in the priest's avenue,

smelling a bunch of lilac, and seemingly lost in admiration of its beauty, and fragrance. The bailiff started and let the blossoms fall from his hand.

"Come up to the house," Rody continued, "and let us see what can be done."

The matter was settled more satisfactorily than Mr. Sloane expected; for Father Feehan, almost to the chagrin of his nephew, who wished to have revenge, insisted on paying the two debts in full.

But Sammy Sloane was very sad for all that. He said to his wife as he sat gloomily by his well-swept hearth that night, that he was afraid he'd soon die. "It was the first real mistake I have ever made in my business," continued Mr. Sloane, gloomily. "I hope Murty Magrath won't hear of it. I was never able to do the clever things that Murty did; but I was always correct. I deserved it, though; for I was influenced by personal feeling. I blamed Father Feehan for having the Liberal candidate resign; and that's what made me think of seizing his nephew's horse."

"Never allow personal feeling to influence you, William," Mr. Sloane went on, addressing his young son who was polishing the grilled mutton bone his father had had for supper. "Always do your duty without being influenced by personal feeling. I'd be dead when you were nine months old, with a bullet through my eyebrow, if I allowed myself to be carried away by personal feelings."

"How was that?" young William asked, taking the bone from across his mouth, and looking earnestly at his respected parent.

"I'll tell you another time," Mr. Sloane replied. "Poor Paddy Fitzsimons got the bullet through the eyebrow instead of me—and all because he allowed himself to be influenced by personal feeling. The mistake of this morning—losing them decrees—will be a warning to me all the days of my life."

"And won't you get anything for the election, Samuel?" his wife asked.

"Yes, I have a claim," Mr. Sloane replied. "I got information for them that may be useful another time. The Carlton Club always acts liberally, and I know Mr. Perrington won't forget me."

"And didn't you employ Jim Dhew to make the fence round the garden?" said Mrs. Sloane.

"Yes, I wanted to have him in my hands; though I knew he wouldn't do anything against the priest."

"And what good would he be for you, then?" Mrs. Sloane asked in surprise.

"Oh, he might be useful up to a certain point, and it would be something to keep him quiet. 'Tis a great disappointment altogether," continued Sammy Sloane mournfully. "We'll have to go back to England. This country is getting wus and wus, and unless there's a stir soon in the ejectment business 'twill be difficult to make both ends meet. God be with the time when Cloonavrona was fifty pounds a year to me, sure money." And Mr. Sloane sighed and dropped his chin upon his chest.

"Here, take your beer," said his wife. "Where's the use in fretting?"

"That's true," he replied, blowing the froth from his mug. "But," he added, after taking a draught, "I hope Murty Magrath won't hear what a fool I made of myself. He'd turn me into ridicule at the Sessions. But I'm not such a dull fellow as Murty thinks."

CHAPTER VIII.

RODY FLYNN VISITS HIS GARDEN—GEORGE PONSONBY
AND HIS WHITE GREYHOUND—ACTING-CONSTABLE
FINUCANE AND SUB-CONSTABLE JOE SPROULE OF THE
GURTHNABOHER STATION.

RODY FLYNN, having taken a look at Father Feehan's garden—and particularly admiring the peas and the "early-york," which was getting white already—thought that, as he had left his work at all he might as well have a look at his own "garden" also. Rody's "garden" was a miniature farm of four Irish acres, a half-mile or so from the village. Here was a strip of pasture, a strip of meadow, a narrow strip of turnips, a wide one of wheat, which looked promising, and one of equal width of potatoes, which, Rody observed, with that sparkle of the eyes and raising of the brows which we have before noticed, were beginning to peep over the ground. All were enclosed by a good quickset fence, on the mossy sides of which primroses grew by the million. The white-thorns in the farthest corner from the road Rody "never knew to be without a blackbird's nest," a thing which he believed could not be said of any other "piece of a ditch" of equal length in Ireland, except that one in the Queen's County, where two pair of blackbirds built every year as "regular as the sun." A happy man was Rody Flynn as he walked along the headland, looking at his wheat and potatoes, and turnips and meadow—not unmindful of the primroses and the hawthorn blossoms, which promised to be abundant

this year—till he came to the strip of pasture. Then the sparkle in Rody Flynn's eyes was dimmed, and the laugh faded from his round chubby face. He turned from the headland and walked to the middle of the strip of green pasture where a little brown cow was quietly grazing, and kept from trespassing upon the meadow and the tilled portion of the field by means of a light chain and a long iron pin driven into the ground. The little brown cow raised her head and turned her mild eyes upon Rody Flynn, and Rody, standing close to her, looked into the little brown cow's meek face for a minute or two without moving. Then patting her upon the shoulder—the least little gleam of the old merry laugh returning to his eyes, as she playfully thrust her black horn under his arm (just as if she wanted to tickle him)—Rody moved on towards the gate, picking up two stones on the way and flinging them over the fence upon the road. Rody Flynn told his melancholy friend, Davy Lacy, one evening in strict confidence that he could never bear to look on while Julia was milking the little brown cow, as it always gave him a “swelling in the heart”—thinking of her mother. And he had known a very decent man who died of a swelling in the heart in the Queen's County.

“I'll give him to Mr. Armstrong. I'll give Rover to Mr. Amby. Who else has a better right to him? And even if he sends him to Tom Dwyer, I have no objection, except that he might let him run apace through that stony place above Corrigdhoun. That's the only objection I have to Rover's being sent to the mountain; I can't keep him any longer myself. Perrington threatened to shoot him; but I'll snare rabbits in spite of his teeth. He can't prevent that, and let him do his best. I have snares set now where he little suspects. But I'll make a present of Rover to Mr. Armstrong.”

During the delivery of this abrupt address the merry look came back into Rody Flynn's face, and his black eyes sparkled as he fixed them on the speaker, who looked all round while he spoke, as if these remarks were

addressed to the hills and the trees, and the sheep and cattle in the fields, and once or twice to the little brown cow—but never to Rody, whose eyebrows rose higher and higher as the speech went on, till at length he laughed outright, and looked into the orator's face.

"You think I ought to shave off this," he went on, grasping his long black beard and combing it with his thin delicate fingers. "Well, you see, shaving is a great trouble; and Mrs. Perrington says the beard is picturesque. She wouldn't shoot Rover or stop me from snaring rabbits. And she likes this too," he added, raising a hareskin cap from his matted jet-black locks, and holding it at arm's length before him, but seemingly unable to keep his large brown eyes fixed on that or any other object for more than a second.

"Yes," he continued, replacing the hare-skin cap on his head, and looking at the torn sleeve of his old green shooting jacket, which, it was evident, originally belonged to some slender and not very tall stripling. "I know I'm in a queer state," and the large brown eyes wandered immediately from the green coat sleeve to the grey tweed trousers, which were equally dilapidated, and as much too short for his long legs as were the coat sleeves for his attenuated arms. "But"—and now his gaze took up the whole horizon—"but I'll come out in flying colours when I come in for my property. I'll buy a white pony then for Mrs. Perrington. Why wouldn't I?" he exclaimed, looking directly for the first time at Rody Flynn, as if he had protested against the white pony. "She was always my friend. Didn't she send for me long ago after she came home from London, and said I was the handsomest boy she ever saw? That was before she married Perrington. I'm sorry she ever married him; for only for my father dying without making a will, and I lost my property, I'd have proposed for her myself." Here he put a whistle, that hung suspended by a cord round his neck, to his lips and blew a long clear note. In an instant a beautiful snow-white greyhound sprang lightly over

the fence and stood beside him. "Now, I'll let you see what a spring there is in him," he went on. "Come down here to the gate." He waved his hand towards the wooden gate of Rody Flynn's field, and the white greyhound instantly flew over it. Then the long slender hand was waved the other way, and the greyhound flew back again. This was repeated half-a-dozen times, to the infinite delight of Rody Flynn, and the evident astonishment of the little brown cow, who raised her head high and gazed wildly at the snow-white hound, as he sprang gracefully backwards and forwards over the wooden gate.

"He's a beautiful animal, George," said Rody Flynn delightedly. "I never saw a handsomer greyhound."

"I know," interrupted poor crazed George Ponsonby, "the one in the Queen's County. I wish I could get one look at that dog in the Queen's County. But look at this, Rody." And he pulled up the leg of his tattered trousers, and pushed down his stocking, exhibiting his skin, with the remark, uttered as if to himself, his wandering eyes resting for a moment on the limb—" 'Tis small, but 'tis straight."

"I told you before what to do to that," said Rody Flynn. "And if you don't do it you'll have a sore leg that maybe 'twont be easy to heal. Cold water several times a day, that's the best thing for it."

George Ponsonby let the trousers drop over his skin, but did not mind pulling up the stocking, and, seeming to forget all about it, blew his whistle and walked away, followed by the beautiful white greyhound.

George Ponsonby's leg reminded Rody Flynn that one of his patients, for whom he felt great sympathy, was probably in his workshop at that moment. He had just quickened his pace lest the patient might go away under the impression that he had gone some distance from home, and the poor fellow's hand was in so bad a state, and the walk from the mountain was so long, it wouldn't do to disappoint him, Rody thought—when three long-legged, wild-looking, pigs rushed past

him at full gallop. Turning round he saw two policemen running breathlessly after the pigs, greatly encumbered by their rifles. There was a shallow pool of mud at the turn of the road, a hundred yards or so further on, into which the three wild pigs plunged, and commenced rooting with all their might.

"For heaven's sake, as they have stopped at last, let us take a little rest," said Acting-Constable Finucane—who was a slender-waisted and military-looking young man, with well-oiled hair and whiskers—just as they had come up with Rody Flynn.

"I wouldn't take a five-pound note to go through the same hardships again," returned Sub-Constable Joe Sproule, letting himself fall on his back against the slanting fence of Rody Flynn's field, crushing numberless primroses, and pushing his head under the hawthorns on the top, feeling the coolness pleasant to his heated face.

"Who is that strange-looking fellow with the white greyhound we have just passed," Mr. Finucane asked, looking ruefully down upon his mud-bespattered uniform.

"Ye can't be long in this part of the country," replied Rody Flynn, "or ye'd know Ponsonby."

"We're only a few weeks in this county," the military-looking acting-constable answered, taking a showy handkerchief from the breast of his jacket, and wiping the perspiration from his forehead. "We belong to the Gurthnaboher station. But who or what is he?"

"He's a poor harmless fellow that's going about," Rody Flynn replied. "His mind is not right. His grandfather was a Protestant clergyman; but his mother made a foolish marriage. Both she and her husband died, and poor George was someway not right in his mind, and is going about from one place to another—here to-day and there to-morrow—just like a poor fellow—another gentleman's son—I know in the Queen's County."

"I knew he was a gentleman," said the sub-constable,

who held a branch of the white-thorn, under which his head was thrust, between his teeth. "The first look I gave at him I knew he was a gentleman."

"It must be hard for a gentleman to disguise himself," said Rody Flynn, raising his eyebrows and laughing, as he turned round expecting to catch a glimpse of the scarecrow figure in the tattered green shooting jacket going up Ballykiraun hill. But another tall figure, in whitish cord knee breeches and long-tailed blue body coat, caught his eye near the next turn of the road. It was Sammy Sloane's clever rival, Murty Magrath, who, no doubt, had been out on business that morning—like Sammy himself—to soothe in some measure his irritation at the turn affairs had taken in regard to the election of a fit and proper person to represent the county in the Imperial Parliament of Great Britain and Ireland.

CHAPTER IX.

MURTY MAGRATH AND THE TWO POLICEMEN—THE GLENMOYNAN PIGS—THE RURAL POLICEMAN'S PARADISE, AS PICTURED IN SUB-CONSTABLE JOE SPROULE'S YOUTHFUL DREAMS—THE REALITY AS HE HAS FOUND IT.

MURTY MAGRATH, who had been loitering at the turn of the road, as soon as he saw that he was observed, moved on at an ordinary walking pace, and bade Rody Flynn and the policemen the time of the day very civilly, passing the forefinger of his right hand, while he spoke, all round his unusually long neck, inside the high white cravat which covered the long neck up to the ears, and seemed to press uncomfortably upon his windpipe. "What o'clock might it be?" Murty asked in the most innocent and natural way imaginable, as if the question had been suggested by the watch-key, which the military-looking acting constable managed to display below his belt.

"A quarter to two," the acting-constable replied, having with much trouble got his Geneva watch from the fob of his tight-fitting trousers.

"Good God!" exclaimed Joe Sproule, getting his head from under the hedge, and staring in amazement at his superior officer, "you said it was only eleven when we had the misfortune to meet these three devils. How far is it from the cross beyond the second hill?" he asked, turning to Rody Flynn. "It seems we took two hours and three quarters to come from that."

"'Tis about three miles," was the reply. "Ye must walk mighty slow."

"Walk!" said Joe Sproule, getting upon his legs with a groan, like a man very bad with the rheumatism. "The devil a walk; 'twas all running and tumbling. I never saw the like of it," continued the sub-constable solemnly, as he buttoned up his jacket. "That black pig must have an 'open Sesame,' for d——n the gate along the whole way that didn't fly open the minute he pointed his nose at it." Rody Flynn chuckled; but Murty Magrath passed his finger between his white cravat and his windpipe, and looked innocently unconscious, as he asked Rody Flynn "Was he coming home."

"I am," said Rody, stepping out to keep up with the policeman, with whom he seemed disposed to be companionable.

The three lean pigs with an abrupt grunt rushed out of the pool of mud, and stood in line across the road, as if determined to defend the pass against all comers. Joe Sproule fell back a step, and clutching his rifle dropped upon one knee and "prepared for cavalry," without waiting for the word of command from his superior officer.

"Begob, it is dangerous," muttered Murty Magrath, thrusting all his four fingers between his cravat and his windpipe. "Let us non-combatants stand aside."

"Hush-h-h!" said Joe Sproule, advancing cautiously for a yard or two.

But the three lean pigs stood firm, with their snouts pointed to the enemy.

"I'll show 'em the cold steel," said Joe Sproule, drawing his sword, but never for a second removing his eye from the three pigs. The flash of the cold steel had the desired effect, for the three lean pigs wheeled round with another abrupt grunt and scampered off in the way they should go.

"They're Glenmoynan pigs," Murty Magrath remarked, as the party moved on again. "They seem

to breed for speed and endurance in Glenmoynan. Look at the limbs of the black fellow; did you ever see such bone and muscle? Not an ounce of idle flesh. 'Tis quite different down here. The trouble you'd have here," Murty Magrath observed feelingly, turning to the military-looking acting-constable, who was showing symptoms of feebleness about the knees—"The trouble you'd have down here is to make them walk at all. There's a very gentlemanly herd of pigs about Shannaclough," added Murty Magrath impressively, turning to Rody Flynn, as if for corroboration of the assertion.

"Well, there's a great change both in pigs and people in regard of walking," said Rody Flynn. "I remember when every man and every pig walked to the fair of Cloughbeg, as a matter of course. Now both man an' pig must drive—even comin' into our own little market."

"Yes," returned Murty Magrath, "you won't find a more gentlemanly herd of pigs in Ireland. They take the world easy, and are always contented so long as their bellies are full. But if you put the Glenmoynan pigs in a coach they wouldn't be satisfied."

"Did you see that!" exclaimed Sub-Constable Joseph Sproule in amazement. "Isn't it just as I said"—"open Sesame?"

"Go, turn 'em back," said Acting-Constable Finucane, faintly.

"That's an intelligent fellow," Murty Magrath remarked, when Joe Sproule had started off to drive the three lean pigs out of a ploughed field, the gate of which had yielded to a push of the black one's nose. "He read 'Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves.' The police are nearly all reading men now, and as a consequence are more wide-awake and up to everything, and capable of performing their duties. The police are a most useful and intelligent body of men."

The acting-constable glanced at the speaker, noting his high white cravat, his long-tailed blue body coat,

whitish cord breeches, and light grey stockings, and said to himself that this well-spoken man must be a respectable schoolmaster. Joe Sproule, unconscious of the eulogy of which he was the subject, pursued the three lean pigs through the ploughed field, sinking ankle-deep in the rich loam, and stumbling at every step, till—as he himself declared—he became quite dizzy and thought the ploughed field was rolling and tumbling around him like the sea. Three times did he succeed in bringing his tormentors back to the gate, and as often did they—always led by the black one—double back upon him, one rushing to the right, one to the left, and the black one out between his legs, all three meeting again, with every sign of mutual satisfaction, in the very middle of the ploughed field.

When this manœuvre had been successfully executed for the third time, in spite of a sharp thrust of the rifle muzzle into the snout of the ringleader, Joe Sproule sat down in despair upon the soft clay, muttering that it was too much for “human nature.”

“You don’t understand pigs,” said Murty Magrath, craning his long neck over the fence, and making as much room as possible for his windpipe in the white cravat.

“Don’t I?” muttered Joe Sproule, sulkily.

“Can’t you say—hurrish! hurrish! bogh! bogh! to ’em—like a Christian,” said Murty Magrath, reproachfully, but mildly.

“Well, I’ll try it,” returned Sproule, submissively, getting up from the ground, pressing his knuckles against his spine, and making up his mind for an inevitable attack of lumbago.

“Hurrish! hurrish! bogh! bogh!” cried the sub-constable as earnestly and persuasively as he could to them, and after another long run he had these extraordinary animals near the gate once more.

To his great relief they condescended to pass out this time, and Joe Sproule resumed his place by the side of his superior officer, panting and gasping for breath.

"Ah," sighed Sproule, "when my mother's first cousin, the head constable, came to my father to get leave for me to 'join,' and told the poor old man that I'd have a 'gentleman's life'—how little he or I thought 'twould ever come to this."

"The police have their hardships as well as the rest of us," Murty Magrath remarked to Rody Flynn. "I believe the Queen herself and the rest of the Royal Family have their troubles. There's no wan without 'em in this ugly world. To my own personal knowledge, Barrister Howley himself has his cares, and so has the Clerk of the Peace, and the Sub-Sheriff."

"Nothin' to do but walk up and down," continued Joe Sproule, recalling his early dreams. "Your boots shinin' an' the heels soundin' on the curb-stone. Pintin' your baton to a dung-heap an' saying, 'Take that out o' that,' and findin' it gone when you'd come again. Comin' to a row when 'twould be over, an' runnin' the fellow in that you'd know 'ud go quiet. Keepin' your cap on in the courthouse, and calling 'Silence' whenever you'd like. Standin' at the corner with a little varnished cane in your hand, admired by the young women, gentle an' simple; goin' occasionally to a dance in coloured clothes, an' givin' sixpence to the fiddler."

"Sperited!" remarked Murty Magrath to Rody Flynn, and with an admiring glance at the speaker, who went on without heeding the interruption.

"Learnin' the key bugle; brushin' your hair; sittin' on the seat outside the barrack door with your legs stretched straight, your heels together, an' your toes turned out—readin' wan of Bulwer's."

"What did I tell you?" exclaimed Murty Magrath, in a suppressed "aside" to Rody Flynn. "I knew he was a readin' man. Ah! there's nothing like literature to smarten up a policeman. There's no blinkin' the readin' policeman; he's equal to anything. No use tryin' to come round him. When I see a Bo—ahem!—a member of the constabulary on the table,

the first thing I ask myself is : "Is he a readin' man ?" I won't have long to wait before I know whether he is or not ; for if he be a readin' man, he'll be sure to speak of the people sometimes as the 'mob' and sometimes as the 'civilians.' The minute I hear the 'civilians,' I say to myself no danger of him on cross-examination. That," continued Murty Magrath, turning to the sub-constable, "that is a truthful and most beautiful description you have given us of the rural policeman's paradise. No man but a readin' man could do it."

"But what's the reality ?" rejoined Joe Sproule, suddenly halting and looking Murty Magrath straight in the face.

The whole party stood still. The genteel acting constable dropped the butt of his rifle on the ground, glad of the chance of taking a rest. Rody Flynn, surprised into seriousness, thrust his hands into his coat pockets, looking up expectantly into the half-indignant, half-lugubrious countenance of the sub-constable, who also grounded arms, and leant upon his rifle. Murty Magrath made room for his windpipe, with a look of profound gravity and deep and respectful sympathy stamped upon every lineament of his thin pale face.

"What's the reality ?" repeated Joe Sproule, pressing his left hand upon his forehead for a moment, and then letting it drop again to the muzzle of his rifle. "I know what still-huntin' in the mountains of Donegal is," he resumed. "I know what it is to be on the broad of my back in Sandy-row, with an Orangeman dancing on my stomach, whistling 'Lillibulero,' an' keeping time with his feet. That's a tinker's wife in Limerick," said Joe Sproule, raising his upper lip with his forefinger, and exhibiting two broken front teeth. "A blow of a tin kettle," he added, turning to Rody Flynn. "I'll never forget the sound of that tin kettle. 'Twas like fifty thousand cannons. The sun was flashing on it, an' I thought the skull flew off my head in a blaze of lightnin'. An' just look at this," said Joe Sproule,

taking off his cap and tapping his poll. "That's a *memento mori* of Cappawhite."

"Blood-an'-ounk-adeers!" exclaimed Murty Magrath, making a step backwards and raising his hands in astonishment. "He's a Latinist!"

"I know what hair-breadth escapes mean," continued the sub-constable gloomily, but proudly. "Movin' accidents by flood and field are not incomprehensible to me; I had to wade up to my belly through a bog in the Donegal campaign. But," added Joe Sproule impressively, "may I never get my V's——." The awfulness of this asseveration seemed to startle the military-looking Acting-Constable Finucane from the state of lassitude and general collapse into which he was fast getting, as, with his cap pulled over his brows, he rested droopingly upon his rifle. Acting-Constable Finucane looked earnestly up at his comrade, who, with his clenched hand raised as if he were about to fling something with all his might against the ground, repeated the startling words a second time, looking defiance at his horrified superior officer. "That I may never get my V's," said Joe Sproule, "if I have not gone through more hardships this blessed day, since five minutes past eleven a.m. by Finucane's Geneva, to the present instant, between the cross of Glenmoynan an' that wooden gate, than all the ordeals of my whole existence put together an' rolled into wan, owing to the perverse devilry of that black pig. 'Twas all his doin'. He was the planner and the leader—that was obvious. The other two were comparatively civilised an' incapable of such devices. The Orangeman was an archangel; the four-year-old a philanthropist; the tinker's wife a lamb, a dove, a goddess of chastity and meekness," added Joe Sproule, at a loss for a moment for a suitable cap for his climax, "contrasted with that black pig." He was going to say "compared," but substituted "contrasted"—strongly emphasised—as the more forcible expression. Having relieved his feelings by this outburst, Sub-Con-

stable Sproule shouldered his rifle and resumed his march, looking neither to the right nor to the left till he came to a heap of bog mould on the side of "Casey's forge," which, along with several other humble edifices, had disappeared in Rody Flynn's time from the roadside between his garden and the village. The three pigs were peacefully reposing upon the bog mould close together, the black one in the middle.

"Look at 'em!" exclaimed Joe Sproule in amazement. "Snorin' like lambs! Ah," he added spitefully, presenting his rifle, and taking aim at the black pig's forehead. "How I'd like to send a 'conical' through him!"

"Drive them on," said the acting-constable faintly, "'tis very late."

"Well, draw," returned Joe Sproule. "Let 'em see the steel or they'll run back again. Hush!"

The three pigs got up quietly enough, and trotted on without showing the least sign of ill-humour.

"Well," Murty Magrath observed consolingly, "so far as the job in hands is concerned, you're not like the young bears at any rate; your troubles are behind you. The priest's gate is the only gate between you and the pound now; and 'tis fifty to one it will be shut and bolted. 'Open Sesame' may do for a gad, or even a latch, but not for a bolt."

"Ye're all right," added Rody Flynn, "if they don't rush into Bully's Acre, and get into the river."

"Is the river deep?" Acting-Constable Finucane asked with a shudder.

"No," Rody Flynn replied, encouragingly. "There's not six inches of water in it at present. But there's a good deal of sink."

Acting-Constable Finucane looked down at his high-heeled stylish boots, plastered all over with clay and mud, and groaned.

CHAPTER X.

MURTY MAGRATH EXPATIATES ON THE MANAGEMENT OF PIGS—HE CONSIDERS THE PIG AS FIT A SUBJECT FOR POETRY AS THE GOAT ; BUT SEES HIS MISTAKE—HE IS OF OPINION THAT QUEER NOTIONS GET INTO THE HEAD OF PARLIAMENT, AND DESIRES A CHANGE IN THE LAW AS REGARDS PIGS—JOE SPROULE FURTHERMORE REGARDS THE PIG, NOT THE GOAT, AS THE POLICEMAN'S NATURAL ENEMY.

"WHAT did you mean by saying I didn't understand pigs?" Joe Sproule asked, darting an indignant glance at Murty Magrath, in the corner of whose eye he saw something he did not like at all.

"I thought," returned Murty, mildly, "that you relied too much on compulsion. Compulsion is effective when judiciously applied, and at the proper moment; but there are times when nothing will tell upon a pig like persuasion; and, to be candid with you," added Murty Magrath, lifting his chin out of his high cravat, "I thought I noticed a deficiency of generalship in you that surprised me in a reading man."

"Would you want me to take 'em in my arms?" Joe Sproule asked, indignantly.

"By no means," replied Murty Magrath. "I wouldn't have you stoop to that. Nor even to twisting your hand in the tail and pulling it, pretending 'twas the other way you wanted 'em to go. That may do well enough for a spalpeen, but not for a reading man. But to keep quiet and let them

have their own way during paroxysms; to leave them under the impression that their conduct is a matter of indifference to you; to adopt a decisive course at the critical moment—and to know when to say hurrish! hurrish! bogh! bogh!—that's the way to manage pigs."

"I've had thirteen years' official experience of pigs," broke in Sub-Constable Sproule, with dignity, drawing himself up to his full height and throwing back his shoulders, "besides being intimately acquainted with them in my own father's house since before I was able to walk."

"There's pigs an' pigs in it," rejoined Murty Magrath, blandly. "But wait till you know the Glenmoynan pigs as well as I do, and the correctness of my views will be self-evident to you."

"If that black pig be a typical pig," interrupted Sub-Constable Sproule; "if he is not a *rara avis*—a *lusus naturæ*—then all I can say is, that I may be promoted this day week to the most distant station in Kerry; where the only earthly motive for the exercise of either shoe-brush, clothes-brush, or hair-brush is a possible surprise from the sub-inspector; where promotion would be an anachronism, and where you are perpetually reminded, either by sight or sound, of that insulting lyric—'The Bansha Peelers Went out One Day.' That's all," Joe Sproule, added decisively.

"I knew the author of 'The Peeler and the Goat' well," Murty Magrath remarked, gravely. "One Darby Ryan, of Bansha—a very decent man. Now I wonder some genius never tried his hand on the 'Peeler and the Pig.' I can't see why a pig is not as fit a subject for poetry as a goat.

"'Oh, mercy, sir!' replied the goat,

'And let me tell my story, Oh,

I am no rogue or Ribbonman,

A Croppy, Whig, or a Tory Oh.'

"That's neat, but why not—

" 'Mercy, sir,' replied the pig,
 'Just wait till I my tail unfold ;
I'm not an Orangeman at all,
 Nor a tinker's wife, nor a four-year-old.'

If Darby Ryan was alive, or if his mantle had fallen on any of his posterity, I'd suggest to him to try what he could do with the peeler and the pig. Don't say it would be trying to make a silk purse of a pig's ear. Not at all. There's as much poetry in a pig any day as in a goat.

" 'Meg-geg-geg-geg, let go my leg,
 Or I'll puck you with my horn Oh.' "

"Ah!" exclaimed Murty Magrath, tapping his forehead, and then holding up his finger, after the manner of the poet Moore's statue in College-street, Dublin, "there is the difficulty! I realise now why Darby Ryan never tried his hand on the 'Peeler and the Pig.' I thought it might be the horns and the head that constituted the goat's superiority as a subject for poetry. But no; it is the language. The man was never born," added Murty Magrath with a melancholy shake of the head, "who could put the pig's vernacular in print, and more's the pity. But for that one disadvantage there's not an animal in creation that has more poetry in him than a pig. I don't expect you to coincide in my opinion," said Murty Magrath, observing Joe Sproule's eyes fixed suspiciously upon him. "You should be more or less than man to be unprejudiced in your present state of mind; but if you reflect upon what I say in cooler moments you'll find I'm right."

"Do you belong to this part of the country?" Joe Sproule asked.

"Yes," was the reply. "I was bred, born, and reared

in that little village whose smoke you can see peacefully curling, if you move to this side of the road."

"'Tis like a dream to me that I saw you before," muttered the sub-constable, eyeing the tall figure beside him suspiciously, "but I can't remember where. Do you smoke?"

"I take a blast now and then," said Murty Magrath. "There's no law against it that I ever heard of."

They walked on in silence for another while; Rody Flynn, who had dropped a little behind, presenting an admirable illustration of laughter, holding both his "sides." The silence was broken by the exclamation, "Hullo!" from Murty Magrath. "Did you see that?" he continued, turning round to Rody Flynn, who had just wiped the tears from his eyes and become comparatively calm. "Wasn't it beautifully done?"

"Ponsonby's white greyhound couldn't do it better," said Rody Flynn.

"Like a steeplechase," rejoined Murty Magrath. "And see how beautifully they're keeping together across the field, the black leading, and the other two well up. Ah," continued he, turning to the two policemen, "when you come to know the Glenmoynan pig ye'll admire his speed and his bottom. Aren't they as fresh now as they war the minute ye picked 'em up?" Murty asked with enthusiasm. "And ye'll see 'em thrust their snouts through the pound gate—when ye have 'em in—without a hair turned, and not the least blown."

"What's to be done?" said Joe Sproule, gasping for breath.

"Go turn them back," replied Acting-Constable Finucane absently.

"Heavens and earth! What do you mean?" shouted Joe Sproule, breaking into open insubordination, and looking as if there and then he would dash his rifle against the ground and trample upon the jacket in which he once fondly hoped he was to have a gentleman's life.

"You cannot say," returned the genteel acting-

constable, reproachfully; "that I did not do my full share of the day's duty?"

"If they take the next fence," interrupted Murty Magrath, who seemed to be getting uneasy at the turn things were taking, "they'll be into a magistrate's turnips."

"Well," said the sub-constable, calmed by the fear of a "report," "will you hold my rifle and my belt an' I'll see what I can do?"

The acting-constable hung the sub-constable's belt on his arm, and, with a rifle in each hand, watched his comrade pursuing the three pigs through the large field, the fence of which they had cleared in a manner that the winner of the "Rock Stakes" might have envied. Unencumbered as he was, and having the firm greensward under his feet, Joe Sproule found his chase almost exhilarating compared with that through the ploughed field; and the three pigs, seeming conscious of the altered state of things, cantered back to the road and again cleared the fence in a manner that called forth the plaudits of Murty Magrath, and made Rody Flynn's round black eyes sparkle like diamonds.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Murty Magrath, "the black fellow is facin' this way."

The military-looking acting-constable stood paralysed in the middle of the road, with a rifle in each hand. He opened his mouth till the chin-strap of his cap got into it like a bit—giving him the look of an over-ridden and used-up steed—as the black pig came on at a fearful pace, ignoring obstruction. The acting-constable stood spell-bound, and never moved a muscle—except those connected with the under jaw—till the black pig had rushed past him. Then the acting-constable turned "right about face," and tore frantically down the road in pursuit of the black pig, a rifle in each hand, and Joe Sproule's sword swinging from his arm, and striking him behind and before about the legs.

"I thought it wasn't in him," said Murty Magrath. "He can put on a quiet spurt. He's gainin' on him."

If he can keep it up he'll get before him in less than no time." The black pig seemed to think so too, or he may have suddenly remembered that his two companions were gone the other way. Not sharing Sub-Constable Joe Sproule's prejudices, we don't care to suggest diabolism, pure and simple, on the part of the black pig. We content ourselves with simply recording the fact—without stopping to inquire into motives—that just as Acting-Constable Finucane was straining every nerve for a final and successful spurt, the black pig wheeled round without a moment's warning, and, rushing right against Acting-Constable Finucane's shins, "whipped the legs from under him," as Rody Flynn afterwards expressed it, when describing the catastrophe to his friend Davy Lacy, and brought that promising officer flat upon his face with a terrific crash.

"If the rifles were loaded I'd feel uneasy," Murty Magrath remarked.

"I was afraid he was hurt," said Rody Flynn, looking relieved on seeing the acting-constable rise to his feet, and gaze all around the horizon as if he were making astronomical observations.

"Let the pig pass," said Murty Magrath, as the black pig trotted leisurely back to join his companions, looking quite innocent and showing no signs of excitement whatever. "They'll get on all right now," he continued. "I was getting a little uneasy for fear they'd give it up when the pigs got into the field. But 'tis all right now. They're d——d decent fellows." Unfortunately Joe Cooney left the gate open when returning with Mr. O'Keeffe's horse from the forge and didn't mind closing it when riding out again an hour or two later.

The horse pranced and capered while passing Rody Flynn's. But even Father Clancy's grey mare pranced and capered when passing Rody Flynn's—which used to astonish the curate, who, for want of a better explanation, attributed the grey mare's liveliness to the scarlet geranium in the window, never dreaming that it was all Joe Cooney's doing.

"I suppose that is the priest's gate," said Joe Sproule.

"Yes," Rody Flynn replied.

The black pig seemed to have overheard the question. He held up his nose, as if to inhale the odour of the lilac blossoms, and then moved sideways to the gate, pushing it open, and, waiting politely till his two companions had passed, walked leisurely up the avenue and looked into the parlour window with rustic curiosity. It was plain he had never seen so fine a house as that in his life.

"Where is Joe?" Father Feehan asked. "Tell him to turn out these pigs."

"I sent him on before us with my horse," Mr. Robert O'Keeffe replied. "Some report of his being seized might have reached Mr. Cormack's ears; so I told Joe to ride him down and say I would go with you on the car."

The priest and his nephew went outside the hall door, and stood on the steps, looking with some surprise at the three lean pigs, who, with their snouts in the air, seemed to be trying to count the windows in the front of the house.

"Let us leave 'em there and be d——d," cried Joe Sproule.

"That's Sub-Inspector O'Keeffe's brother," Murty Magrath remarked. "And the parish priest is his uncle."

The two policemen immediately marched up the avenue, keeping the step.

Rody Flynn and Murty Magrath walked on through the village street, the one stopping at his own house and the other continuing his way over the bridge.

The three pigs behaved very decently this time, and allowed themselves to be driven back to the gate and down the village street without demur. Joe Sproule wondered whether respect for the priest might have had anything to do with this gratifying and unexpected change of behaviour. If it had, and if it was to be his fate to remain long at the Gurthnaboher station, the sub-constable devoutly hoped that the parish priest of Shannaclough might soon pay a visit to that neighbourhood, and particularly to the townland of Glenmoynan.

"The little man is a coöper," Joe Sproule remarked. "That's a very nice little house he has. And I suppose that nice girl is his daughter. But I wonder what is the tall fellow. He's a tradesman, I think."

"I thought he might be a country schoolmaster," Acting-Constable Finucane replied. "He reminded me of a picture I saw of a schoolmaster in some magazine."

"He's a bright fellow, whatever he is," said Joe Sproule. "But you couldn't be sure sometimes but he was humbuggin' you. Maybe 'twas in a picture I saw him before, with a pipe in his mouth an' his hat back on his poll. 'Twas runnin' in my mind, too, where did I see the little man. But now I remember—'twas a picture I saw called 'Mine Host of the Cherrytree,' that was the dead image of him; when he was laughin'—which was mostly always—the other fellow was always serious," mused Joe Sproule. "But you'd see somethin' about the left cheek an' the corner of the eye that looks suspicious. Did you ever see anything like the change for the better in the pigs? There they're turnin' the right way of their own accord. Just as if they knew where they were goin', an' hadn't the laste objection. I wish there was some change in the law with regard to the pigs," Sub-Constable Sproule continued, as he and his comrade passed over the bridge. "To let them have their own way altogether, or to reduce their number by taxation instead of the dogs. I see no use in taxin' dogs, except, that as a rule, now only wan at a time barks at you instead of two or three. Where's the advantage of that? I was never put to any trouble by a dog but once, an' there was a licence for that fellow. Very quare notions get into the head of Parliament. But if they'd tax the pigs 'twould be something creditable. That black fellow, in all probability, wouldn't be in existence to-day if he were taxed," added Sub-Constable Sproule. "There's reason in what the long fellow said about the peeler and the pig. The pig is our natural enemy and not the goat. The goat is fiction. Why should a sensible man take offence at fiction? But the

pig is reality. The pig is a stubborn fact. 'Tis the pig we ought to abominate, an' not the goat. 'Tis a mercy, as the long fellow remarked, that the pigs' vernacular is not spellable. If it was we'd never know an hour's peace. We wouldn't be let pass through a village in this peaceable manner if the pigs' vernacular could be put into a ballad. That chap with the ankles there," said the sub-constable, scowling at Jacky, the cobbler, who was waiting all alone in Bully's Acre for school to break up, "that fellow wouldn't be silent at the present moment if the pig's vernacular could be put into print, like 'meg-a-geg-geg.' There's that much to be thankful for," continued Joe Sproule, with a grateful sign. "But if agitation an' the force were not antagonistic an' incompatible—natural enemies in fact—I'd go in with all my heart an' soul for an agitation to abolish pigs, or at least to reduce their number by taxation, an' make logs compulsory—if not muzzles."

CHAPTER XI.

THE TALL BAILIFF THANKS THE TWO POLICEMEN—HE ADMIRES READING MEN, AND SEES “THE STORIES OF WATERLOO” IN ACTING-CONSTABLE FINUCANE’S EYE—JOE SPROULE REMEMBERS HAVING SEEN THE TALL BAILIFF BEFORE—A KNOWLEDGE OF LATIN COMFORTING TO THE MIND UNDER CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES—THE TALL BAILIFF RECOMMENDS THE POLICEMEN TO TRY IT, BUT IMPORES THEM TO PRONOUNCE THE LANGUAGE LIKE CHRISTIANS.

THE tall man with the long neck enveloped in the white cravat, was standing at the pound gate. The three pigs passed in mutely and reverentially with their noses close to the ground.

“’Tis amazin’” Joe Sproule remarked, looking somewhat awe-struck. “I thought we’d have the devil to pay up and down the lane. But no! you’d think ’twas into a cathedral, while the bishop was preachin’, they were goin’. The Glenmoynan pigs must be a very peculiar race, for in all my experience I never met the like of ’em.”

“Thank ye,” said Murty Magrath with a polite bow to the two policemen, as he handed a paper to the pound-keeper, when the three pigs had passed in through the gate.

The two policemen stared at him.

“I always said,” continued Murty Magrath, complaisantly, “that we never could get on without the Bo—ahem!—the constabulary. A most useful body

of men is the constabulary, especially now, when, as a rule, they are readin' men."

Joe Sproule opened his eyes wider while the military-looking acting-constable began to show signs of being frightened.

"Open Sesame," continued Murty Magrath, surveying Joe Sproule with bland admiration, "satisfied me that you were a readin' man. And when you spoke of 'wan of Bulwer's,' I was sure of it. But I confess," added Murty Magrath, fixing his eyes upon the ground, and with a solemn movement of the head, "I confess I was unprepared for the Latin. An uncle of my mother's," Murty Magrath went on confidently, looking from one to the other of the dumfounded constabulary officers, "was a classical teacher. He took great pains to get some Latin into me; but I resisted. Like yourself," he remarked, addressing himself specially to Joe Sproule, "he relied too much upon compulsion. And I believe I always had a spice of the Glenmoynan pig in me; the devil wouldn't fatten me, or make me do anything I didn't like myself. But my mother's uncle was a tough wan. Lord, what a kithogue he had!" exclaimed Murty Magrath, twisting his shoulders and wincing at the bare recollection of that classical left hand. "And as for the rod, as he called it, but it was a compressed shillelagh—the essence of everything stinging was infused into that instrument. No matter how low down he'd hit you with that rod, you'd instantaneously feel it comin' into your throat; you'd be tryin' to swally something the minute that rod touched your person. Ah, wasn't there venom in it!"

The pound-keeper grinned; but Joe Sproule and the acting-constable only stared.

"Well, he did whale a trifle of Lilly's Grammar into me," Murty Magrath continued. "'Tis not very useful so far as I can see; but 'tis pleasing to the mind sometimes. When I saw them pigs trotting so elegant over the bridge, Lilly's Grammar came to my mind and I said—*Numquam sera est ad bonos mores via!* which

means good manners on the road—to the pound or elsewhere—is better late than never. And in like manner when ye so kindly took charge of 'em at the Cross of Glenmoynan, I just got over the ditch for fear ye'd be anyway shy. I at once said *Nemo mortalium omnibus horis sapit*, which, as near as I can make out is, no mortal policeman is wise at all hours."

"What are you?" Acting-Constable Finucane asked, falteringly.

"A sheriff's officer," was the reply "or, if you prefer the more commonly used term, a bailiff. The decree was only for one pound fifteen and fourpence halfpenny. But I thought it would be cruel to separate the creathers; so I seized the three."

"'Tis an awful sell," said Acting-Constable Finucane, looking piteously into Joe Sproule's face.

"You're a man of few words," said Murty Magrath, pleasantly. "But don't tell me you're not a readin' man. I see 'The Stories of Waterloo' in your eye. Tell the truth now, don't people call you captain, just as if they couldn't help it? Now if you volunteered the time of the Indian war, I'm lookin' at you," continued Murty Magrath, shutting one eye and fixing the other on the black pig, reposing in the far corner of the pound, "on the broad of your back on a sofy in the mess-room, smokin' a cigar. Or"—here Murty Magrath moved his feet genteely, and turned half round, with an air and look which we think the word coquettish will best convey an idea of—"all round the room you know; waltzin'. I'm sorry you didn't volunteer for India, though your loss to the constabulary would be felt. I hope," Murty asked with concern, "that fall on the heap of stones in the quarry didn't hurt you much?" Acting-Constable Finucane stooped down and rubbed his left shin. "As for the fall on the road," added Murty Magrath, "I wouldn't mind that. A fall on the flat is nothing; you just feel upset, that's all; but that tumble in the quarry looked ugly."

The tall bailiff had lit his pipe while delivering these

last remarks, and now stood leaning against the pound gate, puffing contemplatively with his hat back on his poll. He thrust his hands into his breeches pockets, and raised one shoulder up nearly to his ear. A light seemed to break upon Joe Sproule as he gazed upon the tall bailiff, who had undergone quite a metamorphosis in a moment.

"I remember now," Joe Sproule muttered. "'Twasn't a picture. 'Twas you was sittin' on the lime-kiln while we were chasin' 'em round the quarry."

"'Twas" was the reply. "And d——d smart fellows ye are. 'Twas a pleasure to be looking at ye. Sure I might have known even then that ye were readin' men. That wary expression, 'try 'em diagonally, as they won't go straight,' taken in conjunction with the way ye got over the large heap, might have satisfied me that I had cultivated minds to rely upon."

"You didn't give us much assistance," said Joe Sproule.

"No," replied Murty Magrath. "I said I'd act magnanimously and leave ye all the credit. And I'm not sorry for it. It would be unworthy of a sheriff's officer of thirty years' standing, to step in and rob ye of an iota of the glory. I leave such meanness to Sammy Sloane and the likes of him. He's a little Saxon without an idea in his head; knows nothing about pigs but to put a fat slice between two pieces of bread and chaw it. If it was him instead of me, ye couldn't talk of this day's work, as ye can now, of a winter's night, sittin' round the fire like the farmer's rosy children, when some gentle hand will tap at the bolted door, maybe to tell ye that your friend the tinker's wife was sending some poor fellow's front teeth inside his shirt. But you didn't say whether yours went down," said Murty Magrath, thrusting his finger inside his cravat. "But don't suppose," the bailiff added, "that I want to deny that I am under an obligation to you. I am, and I acknowledge it. Good evenin' and safe home. I'll drop in to see ye the next day I am passing. You'll know by that time

whether that black pig is very like a black swan, or only a common character in Glenmoynan."

"Where did you pick up your Latin?" he asked, turning round after having walked half a dozen yards from the pound gate.

"In the 'Spellin' Book Superseded,'" replied Joe Sproule, evidently doubtful as to whether the tall bailiff was not after all a civil and sociable person.

"'Twasn't whaled into you?" the tall bailiff inquired.

"No," replied the sub-constable, "Finucane and me studied the Latin and French phrases, of our own accord."

"Ha! ye haven't the Glenmoynan pig in yer insides," said the bailiff. "There's nothing gives a young man confidence like a few Latin phrases, besides the comfort to the mind when a fellow feels cast down. Try it, and you'll find I'm right. The next time you make an ass of yourself just say, *Nemo mortalium omnibus horis sapit*, and you'll find how comforting it is. But mind say sa-pit like a christian," added the bailiff benevolently, "and not say-pit, like Parson Latouche. And above all," he continued, imploringly, raising his hand and waving it several times towards Joe Sproule, "don't make a saw-pit of it. That's worse even than say-pit, for 'tis barbarous—and would be uncommonly out of place in the mouth of an intelligent policeman whose teeth have met with accidents."

Having delivered himself of this impressive lecture, Murty Magrath put his hands under his coat-tails and walked leisurely away, softly whistling the "Peeler and the Goat."

CHAPTER XII.

ACTING-CONSTABLE FINUCANE THINKS IT AN AWFUL SELL—JOE SPROULE HAS GLOOMY FOREBODINGS, AND CONTINUES TO PROPOUND HIS VIEWS ON THE PIG QUESTION—LARRY FOLEY'S SWINGING-SIGN.

"AN awful sell," said Acting-Constable Finucane in a whisper, as the bailiff's coat tails disappeared round the corner of the lane.

"Horrid," replied Joe Sproule, gruffly. "'Twill be a mercy if we don't find the pig superseding the goat at fairs and markets, in city and hamlet, on highways and bye-ways, before we're many months older. For curse me," added Sub-Constable Sproule, mournfully, "if that fellow has not cleverness enough in him to put gruntin' into a ballad an' make it go well to a popular tune. If so, let Government look out for increased accommodation in lunatic asylums; for existence under such circumstances would be simply an impossibility. That's my view of the case."

"Sproule," said Acting-Constable Finucane, "it makes a fellow worse to be listenin' to you. Where's the use of gloomy forebodings? You were always a grumbler."

"Ah," sighed Joe Sproule, "if St. Patrick turned his attention to pigs an' didn't mind the serpents! What's a rattle-snake to a contrayry pig? A comparatively inoffensive reptile. The rattle-snake rattles an' you keep out of its way or kill him, an' there's no more about it. There'd be no puttin' rattle-snakes to pound it

found upon the Queen's highway, I suppose. But I have no doubt the saint hesitated to encounter the pigs; an', the Lord knows, no blame to him. 'Tis hard by all accounts to vex a saint. But I defy the angel Gabriel to drive that black pig to pound without losing his temper."

"You'd drive me out of my senses," said Acting-Constable Finucane, "only that I'm too used up and collapsed to be aggravated. The pigs are safe under lock and key. We have done our duty. Let us go and now deliver the despatch an' forgive an' forget. For my part, I had the worst of it, and yet I bear no ill-will to the pigs."

"I detest the whole seed, breed, an' generation," rejoined Joe Sproule with bitterness.

"I always saw you take kindly to 'em in detail," returned the acting-constable. "There's few parts of the animal I haven't seen you relish either with white cabbage or greens."

"Bad luck to you for mentionin' it," exclaimed Joe Sproule with a grimace. "I smell it this minute, just as if I had the lid of the pot riz an' the flesh fork in the cabbage to feel if it was soft. I feel a quare sensation where my teeth was, an' a wakeness all over me, besides an emptiness in my inside. But, Finucane, you were always illogical. Is it because I object to live pigs I must have a prejudice to dead wans?"

"It seems to me," Mr. Finucane replied, "that you can't have 'em dead unless you first allow 'em to be alive for a certain period of time."

"Lord! what a narrow view you take of things," said Joe Sproule, scornfully. "Isn't the world wide? An' isn't ships plenty? Is there no such thing as exports or imports? I never meet a salt herrin' strayin' on the Queen's highway, yet I know where a middlin' wan is to be got for a ha'penny at most seasons of the year. But mark what I say. If the law regulatin' pigs continues in its present state, you'll see us supplied with handcuffs for their hind legs, with ropes attached. Won't you feel

comfortable, thryin' to look martial with a couple of pigs pullin' different ways, an' in danger of being fined or degraded if you let go an' lose your handcuffs."

"If it comes to that," said Acting-Constable Finucane, infected in spite of himself, by his comrade's bad spirits, "I'll resign; but, for God's sake, Joe, try an' take a more cheerful view of things in general. If you go on at this rate you'll put me into the horrors."

"Well," returned Joe Sproule, "pull out the Geneva, an' see what o'clock it is."

"Half-past four," said the acting-constable, looking at his watch.

"Now pull out that sevenpence ha'penny," said Joe Sproule. "'Tis long enough rubbin' against the Geneva an' spilin' the chasin'. Keep it in the heel of your fist, an' we'll see what soart o' stuff they keep in the house near the bridge."

Mr. Finucane did as he was requested with an alacrity that contrasted strongly with his previous helplessness.

"Mind," continued Joe Sproule as they moved on towards the bridge, "if the sheriff's officer happens to be there, I hope you'll have the moral courage not to offer him a treat."

"Do you think I'm a fool?" the acting-constable asked, indignantly.

"I don't know," Joe Sproule replied. "There's some soart of fascination in the fellow. I never saw his villany in all its naked deformity till he was gone. I couldn't make up my mind about him while he was talkin'. But I most decidedly object to 'what will you take,' as applied to him while coppers are so scarce. Quite different as regards the little man that's the picture of 'Mine Host of the Cherry-tree.' There's no harm in his laugh. And I saw by his face that he was really concerned when you came down so flat an' so sudden on the road. If he turns up offer him a treat and welcome. But I hope he won't tell his daughter about the pigs. The curse of Cromwell on the breed, say I. Only for 'em some few glimpses of my early dreams might be realised.

'Twas tryin' when, after a day in the bogs still-huntin' you found yourself on 'terra firma' to reflect that instead of admiration or sympathy to cheer you you'd have to run the gauntlet of scowls before you could reach your quarters to put on dry clothes. 'Twas depressin' when comin' to your senses, after bein' levelled in Sandy-row on the twelfth, to see 'serve you right' in the countenances of both parties, and the horrid indifference to your position in the midst of promiscuous pavin' stones at the fair of Cappawhite, is enough to make a man hate his species with an undying detestation. But the pigs is worse than all. The pig is the policeman's toothache. No matter what you suffer you are laughed at."

"There's a good deal of truth in what you say," assented Acting-Constable Finucane.

"Stop!" exclaimed Joe Sproule, when they had reached the bridge. "Don't go in there. Let us try the other house."

"Why so?" Acting-Constable Finucane asked in some surprise.

"Read the swingin'-sign," replied Sub-Constable Sproule, turning away his head and fixing his eyes on the mountain.

"'Entertainment for man and—'" the acting constable read.

"An' *what*?" Joe Sproule asked, still gazing at the blue dim of the mountain.

"Nothin'" replied Acting-Constable Finucane. "That's all, except the effigy of a quadruped."

"Don't you see," said Joe Sproule, dropping his eyes from the summit to the base of the mountain. "Don't you see 'tis the photograph of that black pig painted white. 'Entertainment for Man an' Pig' is the legend on that sign-board."

"Joe," said his comrade with concern, "you're too sensitive. If you go on at this rate you'll get pigs on the brain. 'Tisn't a pig at all, at least not a whole pig. Look again an' you'll see the head joins at an acute angle with the neck. Therefore it can't be a whole pig."

"Ye're admiring that work of art," a voice behind them exclaimed. "An' no wonder."

The two policemen turned round and saw their friend the sheriff's officer standing close to them with his hands under his coat tails, scanning the sign-board approvingly.

"I call that genius," continued Murty Magrath. "A traveller with a horse turns the corner, an' reads 'Entertainment for Man and Horse' on that sign. A traveller with a mule turns the corner an' reads, 'Entertainment for Man an' Mule.' A traveller with a cow turns the corner and reads, 'Entertainment for Man an' Cow.' An' so on, whether bull, bullock, yearling calf, or donkey, each sees that what he wants is to be had at Larry Foley's. Even the weary an' way-worn traveller with the pig plucks up his spirits, an' feelin' for the coppers in his waistcoat-pocket, walks into Larry Foley's hopin' to find welcome and temporary rest."

"Come in an' have a drink," said Acting-Constable Finucane, rather awe-struck, and thinking it wise to propitiate this extraordinary sheriff's officer.

"As 'tis your first time askin' me I can't say no," replied Murty Magrath, getting his finger down between his white cravat and his windpipe. "But you'll travel far before you meet so expressive an allegory upon a swingin'-sign as this of Larry Foley's. 'Tis really beautiful. Every one can read just what answers him on it. As I tell Sammy Sloane, Larry Foley's swingin'-sign is like the Bible—to be interpreted according to your own fancy."

"Come in," said Joe Sproule, quite subdued. "I hope we'll become better acquainted."

"Thank you," said Murty Magrath. "But you didn't look like wishin' to cultivate my acquaintance when you turned round just now. But it was that swingin'-sign softened you. Lilly's Grammar explains that too. There's few things in life that Lilly's Grammar won't apply to. You wanted to eat me without salt a minute ago. There was ferocity in your eye-brows, till you

looked at Larry Foley's swingin'-sign. But that recalled the influence of the liberal arts upon your mind.

*'Adde quod ingenuos dedicesse fideliter artis,
Emollit mores, nec sinit esse feros.'*

I'll give you the translation when we have our legs under the table in Larry Foley's tap-room."

And Murty Magrath led the way into the public-house, followed by Acting-Constable Finucane and Sub-Constable Joe Sproule, who began to think that, after all, they had found a friend and a patron in the sheriff's officer, whose acquaintance it would be a great mistake to miss any legitimate opportunity of cultivating.

CHAPTER XIII.

RODY FLYNN DRESSES CON COONEY'S WOUNDED HAND, AND GIVES HIM SOME GOOD ADVICE—NELL, THE COBBLER, IS RELIEVED ON LEARNING THAT HER FEARS THAT JACKY'S BRAINS WERE COMING OUT, ARE UNFOUNDED—JOE SPROULE RECOGNISES AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE, AND WON'T BE SURPRISED IF HE SHOULD ENCOUNTER ONE OR TWO MORE BEFORE HE GETS BACK TO GURTHNABOHER STATION.

THE expected patient was leaning upon the window in the workshop so absorbed in a newspaper some three weeks old, that Rody Flynn had taken off his coat and hat and was in the act of putting on his apron, before the absorbed reader was aware of his presence.

"Begor, Rody, there's fine readin' in this paper," was his first remark on recovering from his surprise in finding that the cooper had opened the half-door and passed in unknown to him.

"Put it in your pocket and take it away with you," said Rody Flynn, placing his paper cap on his round close-cropped head.

"I never cared about readin' till I got this hurt," he replied, trying to fold the paper with one hand; "but now I'm beginnin' to take pleasure in it, as I won't be idle. I asked Joe to keep any old newspapers he'd find goin' about at the priest's. An' now I'm beginnin' to take delight in 'em."

He was Joe Cooney's eldest brother, Con, a tall, broad-shouldered young fellow, but pale and worn, and with a spirit-broken depression which it was saddening to look at.

Julia Flynn thought so as she folded the crumpled

newspapers for him, raising her eyes to his thin face, which, nevertheless, she thought a very handsome face. And her look of compassion perhaps only deepened the sorrowful expression in Con Cooney's eyes as he gazed down gloomily upon her, as one might gaze after some treasure that had sunk into the deep sea, from which it was hopeless to think of recovering it.

"Come in and let me see that hand," said Rody Flynn, leading the way into a little back room where he kept his ointments and plasters, together with a curious collection of bones and strops, a lancet, an instrument for drawing teeth, a phial, and a few other surgical and veterinary instruments. "Bring a basin an' some warm water," he called out to his daughter.

Having brought the water, Julia was returning to the kitchen; but seeing Con Cooney fumbling with his left hand at the cord which passed through the highest button-holes, and kept his coat from falling off the right shoulder, she went to his assistance. The string being untied, the coat fell from the right shoulder—the arm not being through the sleeve—and Julia stood looking into the sad face seeming at a loss whether she could be of any further service.

"Never mind, Julia," he said softly; "when the hand is dressed, I'll ask you to help me to tie on the coat again. But I'd rather you wouldn't see the hand, 'tis so bad."

Rody Flynn put on his spectacles, and carefully and softly undid the bandage.

"There's no improvement," he said, holding his head back to examine the wounded hand. "I don't like how 'tis goin' on at all. I'm sorry you did not take my advice and get a ticket to the dispensary; but your pride wouldn't let you."

"What more could the doctor do than you are doin'," returned Con Cooney.

"The fact is," said Rody Flynn, continuing his examination, "you are starvin'. That is why it isn't goin' on as well as I expected. I knew a man—in the Queen's

County—that had to get his hand amputated because he wouldn't go into the hospital. Now I tell you you must go to hospital. I'll see the doctor an' you'll be well treated."

"I never thought 'twould come to that," said Con Cooney.

Rody Flynn dipped the wounded hand gently into the warm water, and glanced pitifully at the athletic young peasant who, with his chin dropped upon his chest, trembled from head to foot while two big tears rolled down his emaciated cheeks, which for a moment flushed crimson and then became deathly pale.

"I don't see any shame in going to hospital till your hand is well," said Rody Flynn. "But you were always a fool—always a spender—never thinking of the rainy day. Now you see the difference of it."

"I always worked hard," returned Con Cooney. "I was neither an idler nor a drunkard; an' I always went to my duty."

"But you spent every sixpence faster than you could earn it. You should have as good a suit of clothes as the rich farmer's son—an' you got them on credit. I'll engage you're in debt, an' how are you to get out of it with this hand?"

"I always had dacent notions," returned poor Con Cooney, who seemed utterly crushed. "I never done an unmanly act in my life."

"Well, I'll say no more to you now," said Rody Flynn. "But if this is not better the next day, you must go into hospital. Keep yourself dry an' warm, and be out in the fresh air, an' take nourishin' food. But don't mind whiskey. Don't look about you when you go to the bridge to find some one to go into Larry Foley's an' have a glass. You think spendin' at least a shillin' every time you come is a religious obligation."

"I'm very bare now," returned Con Cooney, "havin' to hire two men all the spring, an' wages so high."

"Could you pay 'em at all only for the Sunday Closin' ? Answer me that question."

"I was glad of the Sunday Closin'," Con answered

evasively. "I never cared much for the dhrink myself, but didn't want to have people callin' me a screw, like Matty Mullowney."

"No, you wanted to be a good fellow," returned Rody with a bitter, scornful laugh. "You wanted people to flatter you. Isn't there more respect for Matty Mullowney now than there is for you? He's wan of the snuggest men in the parish. The people that call him a screw would lend him money if he asked it, and court his friendship, while they'd give you the cold shoulder, though they flattered an' praised you while you were spendin' your money like a fool."

"The divil a lie in that," returned Con Cooney with a shame-faced look. "But I'll think of what you say an' turn over a new leaf. Mr. Armstrong said something to me, wan day I was talkin' to him on Corriglea bridge, much like what you're after sayin' now, because he found out I spent fifteen-and-sixpence at Larry's the day before. I was surprised when I saw him down the river to-day. I thought the poor man would never be able to fish the river again. Everybody was glad to see him down again. I wondher if he will be able to come up the mountain for a run. Ponsonby tells me he'll give him his greyhound. I have my doubts about that dog. I'd bet my life Tom Dwyer's little bitch 'ud bate him on the mountain, at any rate. He's not a fit dog for any wan that 'ud want to have a run widout lave. A game keeper 'ud see him five mile away."

"Now, you're allright," said Rody Flynn, putting the finishing touch to the bandage. "Mind keep it always in the sling. Here, Julia; put that string through the button-hole an' tie the coat so as that it won't slip off his shoulder. Will you stop and have a bit of dinner with me?" he asked cheerfully, as he dried his hands on a clean towel.

"Do, Con," said Julia, tenderly, as she drew the coat carefully round his shoulder. "'Tis just ready."

"No, thank you, Rody," returned Con Cooney, glad of an excuse for declining the proffered hospitality.

"Joe is on before me wud Mr. O'Keeffe's horse, an' he said he'd wait at the mill an' give me a ride as far as Mr. Cormack's gate."

"Are you takin' the paper?" Rody asked.

"Yes; 'tis in my pocket," he replied.

"Oh, Con," said Julia, "will you bring this book an' tell Joe to give it to Miss Alice? She told me last Sunday she was goin' back to the convent this week, and maybe she might want to bring the book with her." And Julia got the book with some little trouble into Con Cooney's coat-pocket, warning him not on any account to forget it.

Rody Flynn, having eaten his dinner, went to work briskly to finish the firkin he had in hands when called away in the morning by Joe Cooney. But great as his hurry was—knowing that the firkin would be called for during the evening—the good-humoured cooper stopped more than once to press his hands on his ribs and have a silent laugh as he recalled some of the incidents of the chase after the three Glenmoynan pigs, and the sub-constable's comments thereon. The graphic account of the episode of the tinker's wife, and the new tin kettle in particular, appeared irresistibly droll to Rody Flynn; and as he pictured the scene to himself he unconsciously made his neighbour, Nell, the cobbler, represent the principal female actor in the little drama. It was then rather startling to see the identical Nell with a tin kettle—though not a new one—in her hand, rush into the workshop with dishevelled hair, and a wild anxious expression in her not-to-be-described countenance. Nell pulled her hopeful son Jackey after her, and, pointing to that promising youth's forehead, looked with an inquiring and terrified gaze into Rody Flynn's astonished face.

"What happened to him?" Rody asked.

"Ridin' Terry Hanrahan's mule," Nell, the cobbler, answered, keeping her eyes still fixed upon the cooper's face.

"I thought it was only the skin was rubbed off till

I saw him this minute in Bully's Acre, as I was goin' for a kettle av water, and them big red lumps on his forehead like rasberries."

Rody Flynn put on his spectacles, through which his eyes began to sparkle, as, with his head thrown back, he examined Jacky's wounds.

"'Tis proud flesh," he remarked.

"Is there any danger," Nell asked in an intense terror.

"Let it alone," returned Rody, "an' 'twill be well in a couple of days. People have wrong notions about proud flesh. 'Tis only a sign that a wound is gettin' well."

"God-'lmighty bless you!" ejaculated Nell, the cobbler, dropping upon a firkin which happened to be placed conveniently for a seat near the door. "I'll never be the better of the fright. I thought 'twas his brain was comin' out. Ho! you limb of the divil," she exclaimed suddenly recovering her energy, and seizing Jacky by the hair of the head. "What am I to do wud you? As bad as your father is, you are fifty times worsen, you are! you are!" And her hard knuckles sounded sharply upon the culprit's skull, till with a yell he disengaged himself from her clutches, and rushed out of the door, displaying his bare feet and long shanks in a manner which would at once have suggested to an unprejudiced observer that Sub-Constable Joe Sproule had caught Jacky the cobbler's most characteristic personal peculiarity when he referred to him while passing Bully's Acre as "that chap with the ankles."

At that moment Sub-Constable Sproule and Acting-Constable Finucane were passing, having spent quite a pleasant half-hour with their new friend the bailiff in Larry Foley's tap-room, before delivering their despatch at the police barrack. They were comparatively cheerful, and evidently beginning to take a brighter view of human life. Joe Sproule had just remarked that after all he began to think their lives

had fallen in pleasant places. He caught a glimpse of the cooper's merry face, and, remembering the pretty girl he had seen at the door an hour or two before, felt a not unnatural desire to see her again.

"Come in for a minute," said Joe Sproule cheerily, "till we have a talk with 'mine host of the Cherry Tree.' He'll tell us something about that mysterious sheriff's officer."

Joe Sproule walked smilingly towards the cooper's door. He laughed good-naturedly on seeing the "chap with the ankles" rush out against him, rubbing his shock head and howling fearfully. But in another instant Rody Flynn was amazed to see Sub-Constable Sproule recoil into the middle of the road as if he had encountered a hyena. Nell, the cobbler, stood in the doorway with the tin kettle in her hand.

"Were you ever a tinker's wife in Limerick?" Joe Sproule asked, clapping his open hand over his mouth.

"No," Nell, the cobbler, answered; "but I was a tinker's first and second cousin in Limerick. I remember you."

"Come away!" exclaimed Joe Sproule almost breaking into a run. "This is frightful! This is the most memorable day of my life. Unmerciful disaster follows fast an' follows faster. 'Tis on the cards that the Belfast Orangeman is waitin' at the next cross-roads to pay his respects to me. An' the Cappawhite four-year-old selectin' nice-sized wuns in the quarry on the hill. An' if there's a bog between this an' Gurthnaboher station an' a Jacky-the-Lantern specially detailed to lead me into all the deep holes, 'twon't surprise me in the least. A gentleman's life indeed! Hurry on an' be d——d to you."

CHAPTER XIV.

JULIA FLYNN GOES TO MILK THE LITTLE BROWN COW, AND WONDERS AT HERSELF FOR BEING IN SUCH LOW SPIRITS THAT FINE EVENING—JIM FOLEY ACCOMPANIES HER HOME—RODY FLYNN AND DAVY LACEY, AFTER A TALK IN THE WORKSHOP, GO OUT TO LOOK AT THE GROUND ONIONS AND HEAR THE CUCKOO.

THE words "that lad o' mine" roused Julia Flynn out of a reverie into which she had fallen over her needle-work, as she sat by the window, with her eyes fixed upon Joe Cooney's bunch of lilac. She started up, twisting her abundant brown hair hastily into a fold down the back of her neck that an artist would have admired, and tying a red ribbon round her throat before the little looking-glass that hung in the midst of half-a-dozen pictures about its own size on the wall at the right-hand side of the window—her boarded bedstead, papered with newspapers, occupying the other side. Julia took a peep at her profile, right and left in the little looking-glass, glanced at her shoes and stockings to see that they were tidy; threw her light blue cloak over her shoulders, and seizing the little can from the stillion in the kitchen, hurried through the workshop to the street door. She need not have been in such a flurry, however, for Davy Lacey was at his post earlier than usual, and the little brown cow would not be on the look-out for her till nearly an hour later. Davy took his eyes from the poplar tree, and opened the half door for her. But Julia drew back for a moment till

Father Feehan and Mr. Robert O'Keeffe, who were driving down the street, had passed. Then Julia Flynn tripped on to milk the little brown cow, looking brighter and fresher and happier every step of the way. The breeze was cool and fragrant; the sky was clear and cloudless. Only the dome of the mountain was blue—all the rest down to Martin Dwyer's orchard being quite distinct. The two oblong fields, like an open green book laid back upward against the brown hillside, up near the summit of the first range, Julia knew belonged to Con Cooney. She heard that witty and clever sheriff's officer, Murty Magrath, remark one day, while standing at the door of her father's workshop, that no matter how poor old Joe Cooney might be he was every year getting up in the world; and that however slovenly his system of cultivating his land, no one could deny but that it was "high farming." Julia Flynn's violet eyes often wandered to that lonely-looking home among the heather, while milking the little brown cow morning and evening. It would be pleasant, she used to think, to live up there, and milk little cows in those green fields, the boundaries of which were so wonderfully straight and regular. But she always said to herself that she would never leave her father unless Charlie came home, and married a good wife to take her place. Charlie could not rest if he did not first see the world. Why even his father had the Queen's County to talk about; and how could he be contented unless he knew something of what was going on beyond these hills that seemed to shut out the busy world on every side from Shannaclough? But Charlie always said he'd come home, and work cheerfully with his father after a few years. He was a bright-eyed, manly little fellow—as Rody Flynn's son had every right to be—when he went away. Now he was a bearded man, with a rather stern expression in his face—which was quite out of place in the face of his father's son—if the photograph which Julia always carried in her bosom was to be believed. Julia's heart leaped as she imagined Charlie

coming to spend Sunday with them—yes, with her and Con Cooney—in that lonely home among the heather. This vision had often presented itself to Julia Flynn, only to bring a flush to her cheek and brighter light into her eyes. But this evening, for some reason or other, the thought of Charlie—good-humoured, bright-eyed, manly little Charlie—paying that Sunday visit to the mountain brought the tears to her eyes; and Julia, standing by the side of the little brown cow, bent her head, and covering her face with her hands, let the tears have their way. Julia wondered at herself. These fancies had never even taken the shape of hopes. And even if they had, nothing had happened to make their realisation less likely than it had ever been. Yet she never had been so morbid before.

“God send it is not anything that has happened to Charlie,” said Julia with a deep sigh that came very near being a sob. But Julia might have found the real cause of her emotion in the look that met hers while she untied the string that fastened Con Cooney’s coat a few hours before. She never asked herself what that look meant, nor even consciously thought about it at all, yet that sorrowful look in Con Cooney’s eyes was the true cause of those unbidden tears that so surprised and even alarmed her.

Subduing her emotion by an effort, she commenced milking the little brown cow, keeping her eyes resolutely turned away from the mountain, and trying to find in nearer objects occupation for her thoughts. The primroses were perfectly bewildering in their countlessness. The grass in the meadow portion of the field was becoming high enough to undulate here and there in the soft evening breeze. And there was the first “May bush” she had that year seen in full bloom, in the corner where the blackbirds were wont to build. Now, if she could reach to that snowy bough, she’d pull a branch and bring it home to keep company with the lilac. Poor Joe! what a good poor fellow he was! For a moment there was a laugh in Julia’s eye; but

suddenly she became very grave. Was there the least danger that Joe Cooney might have misunderstood her? He had not the remotest suspicion that his brother Con had even thought of her. And possibly her manner towards him, as Con's brother, might have had a meaning in his eyes very different from what she intended.

"But what right have I to think that anyone at all cares about me?" said Julia to herself as the spirting of the milk into the pail began to fail. "Even Con never told me he cared for me in plain words. I really fear I am very vain. Here is Mr. Jim Foley at the gate with his arms folded, thinking himself the finest and the handsomest and the richest man in Ireland—that all the young ladies are dying about—and I declare I believe I have not a doubt in my mind but it was for nothing else but to be home with me he has walked out this evening. 'Pon my word, Julia Flynn, you're as great a fool yourself as Jim Foley, except that you don't let all the world know it. Come, poor Rosheen, I must pull up the stake and move you to where you can get a mouthful. You have this spot as bare as the palm of my hand. How good and quiet and patient you are! I'd be sorry to part with you, poor Rosheen. Ah! I believe even if I were up there where my heart is, 'tis often I'd look down and think of you here by yourself, poor little old darling! I wonder will I ever again hear poor Charlie repeating that poem about the 'Woman of Three Cows.' 'Twas better than a play to listen to him. There used to be such a roar when he'd come to—'I'd whack you well to cure your pride, great woman of three cows.' Ah, not one of 'em like Charlie! If Con Cooney had his spirit he'd be the finest fellow from this to himself—I'm not such a fool as not to see the difference between them. But for all that I believe I couldn't like Con Cooney better than I do, no matter what he might be."

Julia drove the iron pin into the ground with a few vigorous and well-aimed strokes of a rude mallet, always left in the field for the purpose—having just allowed

the little brown cow to drink from a pool in the dyke, which only ran dry for a few weeks in the middle of the summer. Then taking up her pail she tripped back to the gate with her usual springy step, biting her lip and dropping her eyelids, to keep herself from laughing outright at the affected attitude of Jim Foley, who was standing upon the road, so that all passers-by might admire the symmetry and strength of his limbs, and go on their way rejoicing.

"This is a fine evening," said Julia, closing the gate and walking on as if she had no idea that Jim Foley was coming her way.

"A very fine evening, Julia," he replied, walking on beside her, evidently annoyed that she was going too fast for his ordinary stage strut.

There was silence until they came to the gate of that ploughed field which Sub-Constable Sproule had reason to remember, when Jim Foley gave a more picturesque cock to the broad leaf of his brigandish hat and raked his flowing beard with the fingers of his left hand, and then stretching out his right arm, felt the muscles from the wrist up to the shoulder.

"Murty Magrath," said Jim Foley, "made me take off my coat to show my arm to two policemen that were in with him at my father's. They said they never saw such an arm. Murty says it comes up to his idea of what Hercules or Heenan's arm must be."

"Who is Heenan?" Julia asked. "I often heard of Hercules."

"The boy," Jim Foley replied. "I knew the boy well in New York."

"The boy," said Julia, with a puzzled look.

"Is it possible," returned Jim Foley, "that you never heard of the Benicia boy?"

"Oh! I remember now. He used to fight for wagers. Did you ever fight anybody, Jim?"

"Lots of fellows wanted to back me," returned Jim with a dreadful scowl; "but I have a personal objection to professional fighting."

"And why didn't you give a good beating to that fellow that knocked your father down the little fair day, and then gave you the two black eyes when you came to save your father? I was really surprised when I heard you let that fellow walk off without laying a hand on him—and he such a little fellow too."

"I could not think of fighting," said Jim Foley, as if he pitied her ignorance, "without first undergoing a regular course of training. You don't understand these things, Julia. The ignorance that prevails in this country is truly lamentable."

"It is a wonder how you came back to us at all, Jim."

"I often wonder at myself," returned Jim Foley grandly. "I wish you saw me with my white satin vest that I used to wear at the balls. I'm sorry I ever came back. But having such prospects at home—a licensed house established forty years—I thought it better to come home when my mother sent me the money to pay my passage. Now they'll want me to marry a girl with a fortune. But I'm determined to please myself," said Jim Foley, with a portentous frown. "My mother says I'll never be half bought; but I don't mind; I'll please myself."

Jim Foley struck a few attitudes on the curbstones outside Rody Flynn's door, first looking down the street with folded arms, then looking up the street with folded arms, and then scowling at the poplar tree behind Mr. Armstrong's quaint old house, with folded arms, all for the special delectation of Davy Lacy, who, with his hand under his chin, leant over the half-door—turning his eyes from the poplar-tree and fixing them on Jim Foley reproachfully and sorrowfully, as if he thought Jim Foley ought to be ashamed of himself for being so fine a man. Then Jim Foley marched down to "Terry Hanrahan's corner" and went through the same performance there. After which he marched to the bridge, and took up his post there permanently for the rest of the evening, to the great delight of his mother, who made several mistakes in serving her customers, so difficult

did she find it to turn away her eyes from the commanding figure of her son as with folded arms, and scowl of contemptuous dignity, he contemplated a pugilistic encounter between Jackey, the cobbler, and another promising youth, in Bully's Acre.

"Bad manners to you, Larry Foley," she mentally exclaimed. "Did you ever think you'd be the father of such a fine gentleman as that? What am I to do wid him at all at all? Who will I get for him? There's no wan in this place fit for James Foley. Rody Flynn's daughter indeed! Ha! ha! ha! What a chance she has of James Foley!"

A cart just then passing over the bridge, with four empty butter firkins in it, probably suggested the thought that elicited Mrs. Foley's scornful laughter. The boy driving the cart stopped the horse on the top of the bridge and, running back to the cooper's window, exclaimed breathlessly—"Rody, I forgot to tell you to come over to-morrow to bleed the coult."

"Tell him," returned Rody Flynn, looking quickly up from his work. "I'm gettin' too old for long journeys except in urgent cases. The coult is better able to walk in than I am to walk out, so tell him to send him in to me."

"Very well," the boy replied, running back to his cart just in time to escape the policeman strolling down from the barrack—who, however, would probably have let him off with a reprimand for leaving the horse and cart standing on the bridge, as his master was one of the richest farmers in the parish.

"People are very unreasonable," said Rody Flynn, placing one handle of the drawing-knife on the block and resting his elbow on the other.

"I often wondered how you could stand it," returned Davy Lacy, gettin' the empty sleeve of his coat between his elbow and the half-door, so that he might study the poplar tree more comfortably.

"There was Mrs. Dwyer," rejoined Rody Flynn, "brought me all the way to the mountain foot last week,

for nothin' in the world but because a calf four days old refused to drink her milk that mornin'."

"That's a woman I don't know what to make of," Davy Lacy remarked. "I sent my wife with a bill to her yesterday, an' she sent her home with a piece of the sweetest bacon I ever tasted, but no money. If I liked to humbug her I'd only have to send the bill often an' I'd soon be well paid in presents. But 'tis next to impossible to get the money."

"That's the way," said Rody Flynn, laughing. "An' the husband thinks she pays for everything." But he leant again upon the drawing-knife and looked serious, as he remembered that Mrs. Dwyer had not yet paid him for the twelve tubs and the churns he made for her just that time three years.

"Young Tom called into me the day before yesterday," said Davy Lacy, "to send Miss Cormack's boots without disappointment, as I promised. Ready money there always, an' never cut you in your charges; but if you overcharge or do bad work you lose their custom. Young Tom seems to be a great favourite with them. I wonder might he have a chance of gettin' wan of the daughters?"

"Not the least," Rody replied. "They're too high for that now. 'Tis strange what ups and downs is in the world. Some gettin' rich an' some gettin' poor; an' some keeping on the same level for generations. I of'en tried to find out the explanation of it, but I couldn't. A good deal depends upon the sort of a wife a man gets."

"Some men have great judgment," Davy Lacy remarked. "I needn't go beyond this street to find examples of what you're after sayin'. We have the ups an' the downs an' the levels. You an' me are levels. Dick Walsh is a down; Tom Brady is an up."

"'Tis hard to come at the explanation," said Rody Flynn. "I saw instances in the Queen's County of the stupidest men I ever knew prosperin' in the world, an' really intelligent men hardly able to live."

"If it went by intelligence," said Davy Lacy, turning

round an' looking reproachfully at his friend, "you'd be purchasin' estates."

"No," Rody replied, "I'm not that kind of a man at all."

"Oh, faith, you're not!" asserted Davy Lacy. "Lavin' your work any hour of the day, an' gettin' out of your bed any hour of the night, if man or baste within a circuit of five Irish miles gets an inward pain, an' gettin' nothin' but 'God Almighty bless you's for your trouble—isn't the way to put money in the bank. But goin' into the fever-houses is what surprises me intirely. But I suppose you'll have your reward in the other world," added the melancholy shoemaker, turning again to the poplar tree.

"I hope so," returned Rody Flynn. "But I believe I don't be thinkin' of it at all. 'Tis a kind of satisfaction to my mind. On'y for me Tim Mahon wouldn't get the priest. 'Am I so bad as that?' says he, when I told him to send for the priest. 'You couldn't be worse,' says I. Then he began to agree with me. 'I never went through any hardship,' he says, while I was feelin' his pulse. 'I never got wet feet, nor cold, nor nothin'. An' I always thought God Almighty wouldn't take me short—till I'd be about ninety.' 'Well I tell you,' says I, 'you couldn't be worse. You're a bad substitute for fever. So take my advice an' send for Father Clancy.' So he did. An' the next night, just at twelve o'clock, he got quite clear after bein' ravin' all the day; an' told the woman that was mindin' him to come for me. I got up an' went down to him. He asked me to kneel down an' say the Rosary. So I did. Then he took me by the hand 'God bless you Rody Flynn,' says he, 'you are a lucky man to me.' I asked him was his mind at rest—for I never knew a man that had such a terror of death. 'I'm so well satisfied to die,' says he, 'that I'd be sorry If I thought I'd recover. Sit down and wait till I'm gone.' He closed his eyes, and in about five minutes after I noticed his lips movin', an' when I stooped over him an' asked him did he want to say anything, he just

said again 'God bless you Rody Flynn,' an' departed. I felt happier," continued Rody Flynn, the cooper, opening out his arms, "than if I was after gettin' a million of money!"

"Rody Flynn," said Davy Lacy, turning round again and fixing his eyes upon him, I won't say what you are. A stranger would have imagined, from the severely reproachful expression in Davy Lacy's haggard face, that he looked upon Rody Flynn as a hopeless reprobate. "But," added the shoemaker, taking an old leather-bound "Key of Heaven" from a shelf inserted in the wall, and opening it at the Litany of the Saints, "but if any such people as these"—and Davy Lacy laid his long finger upon the page—"are in existence at the present day, I can inform any inquirin' friends where wan is to be found that wears an apron and a brown paper cap on workin' days."

"Come out," said Rody Flynn, "till I show you my ground onions."

"This lad o' mine ought to be home before this," the shoemaker remarked, taking a parting look at the poplar tree, and pulling his blue body-coat about his shoulders. "I hear Julia at the concertina," he continued, as he followed Rody Flynn into the garden. "That lad o' mine has a great taste for music. He learned the concertina out of his own head."

"I knew a boy who did the same with the fiddle—in the Queen's County," said Rody Flynn.

"That lad o' mine picked the fiddle out of his own head before he got the education," returned Davy Lacy.

"But the boy I knew in the Queen's County," said Rody Flynn, "learned to play the fiddle behind his back. That red sunset is for fine weather. This is the most promisin' season we had for a long time. Do you hear the cuckoo?" exclaimed Rody Flynn, his round face lighted up with child-like glee. "In the grove behind the port," he added with his hand to his ear.

"Yes," said Davy Lacy, as if he were listening to the

*The Fairy may they take a can
... ..*

knell of his dearest friend, "but them two thrushes won't let her put in a word hardly."

"There's not such a country in the world as Ireland," Rody Flynn exclaimed, looking all around him—on the fields, the trees, the green hills, and lastly, upon the blue clover of the mountain, then purpled by the setting sun. "No, in the wide world," he repeated, turning his eyes from the blue mountain to the red sunset. "We don't know how much we have to be thankful for."

"There's truth in what you say," returned Davy Lacy, with a look that seemed to imply that Rody Flynn deserved to be transported for life, if not hanged on the spot, for daring to give utterance to such sentiments.

inimitably Irish

CHAPTER XV.

TOM DWYER THINKS HE WON'T MIND GOING TO ROCK-VIEW—THE SMALLEST OF THE DARLINGS CREATES CONFUSION, WHICH TAKES CAUTH AND HER MISTRESS MUCH TIME AND TROUBLE TO REMEDY—CON COONEY WARNS PONSONBY THAT THE WHITE GREYHOUND WILL GET HIM INTO TROUBLE.

TOM DWYER was gazing on the same red sunset, not altogether uninfluenced, we would fain hope, by its splendour, or by the peaceful beauty of the landscape over which it poured a flood of golden glory. But we fear Tom Dwyer felt not much of that spirit of thankfulness which at the same moment glowed in the heart and radiated from the face of the cooper, to that degree that it suggested to Davy Lacy—whose imagination was, no doubt, assisted by the coloured frontispiece in “the Key of Heaven,” at which he had glanced in the workshop, before turning over to the Litany of the Saints—the extraordinary fancy that if Rody Flynn’s head could take unto itself two little wings and flutter away to brighter regions, it would pass muster among any stray cherubim who might chance to be disporting themselves behind those rosy clouds, in spite of the grey hair and a trifle of wrinkles about the corners of the eyes.

But here comes Nannie and Nellie in their white muslin dresses, and Tom’s face instantly brightens.

“Oh, Tom, it is time for you to get ready; we’ll soon be going,” said Nannie or Nellie—or both together, Tom could not know which.

"Well, I'll think about it," returned Tom; "but don't wait for me. You know I can cross the river and may be there before you."

"Mr. Armstrong has walked on, and will wait for us at the bridge," said Nellie.

"All right," said Tom, smiling and waving his hand. He watched them as they flitted through the orchard like a pair of fairy queens, saying to himself, after all they were still mere children, and where was the good of troubling himself about them yet a while at all events. Perhaps it was his own, and not his little sister's prospects in life that began to make him feel so discontented. This reflection made Tom Dwyer look grave, for he flattered himself that inordinate selfishness was not his foible. He would let things go on in their old course another year or two. In spite of certain hints and indications to the contrary, he scarcely thought the landlord would disturb them so long as the rent was paid up. And the seven two-year old heifers, at which he had just been looking, would more than meet the half-year's rent just due, though it was a pity they should sell them at a sacrifice, instead of keeping them for the October fair of Ballycanis. It is satisfactory, too, to have escaped the unpleasantness, if not the danger of a contested election. Tom Dwyer, as these reflections passed through his mind, wondered at himself for being in such bad spirits all that evening. He lingered in the orchard till there was nothing left of the glorious sunset but one thin streak of fire over the hill of Knockgrana, and the candles were lit in the drawing-room of Rockview House. Of course Mr. Robert O'Keeffe was there; if he were not, there would be light only in the parlour windows. Tom Dwyer thought he would not mind going over to Rockview that evening. He heard his mother's voice proclaiming that some disaster had occurred in the dairy (the smallest of the "darlings," a very puck for mischief, having stolen in under cover of the twilight and overturned a pail of thick milk), and caught a glimpse of Cauth Manogue hurrying across the yard with a lighted

candle. Cauth uttered a terrific yell when she had got about half way—the old gander having caught her by the calf of the leg for daring to disturb his numerous family, who had just settled themselves to sleep by the side of the big pig-trough.

Mrs. Dwyer had got Mick Cormack and Paddy Brien, after their day's work in the field was over, to remove the big trough again from the place where they had deposited it earlier in the day. This second successful removal of the trough had a calming influence upon Mrs. Dwyer's mind; and the sight of Nannie and Nellie in their white dresses in addition lulled her into such a state of dreamy felicity that she remained unconscious of the little pig's explorations among the milk tubs, till a flood of white lava glided along the clay floor and flowed over her shoes. Then Mrs. Dwyer shouted for Cauth and the candle, and was about to shout a second time to know what was delaying her, when Cauth's yell gave such a shock to her mistress that she dropped both the yellow mug and the white jug which she held, one in each hand, containing the material for a bowl of whey for Mr. Armstrong. And Cauth, on reaching the dairy door, stared with open eyes and mouth at her mistress standing helplessly in a little sea of thick milk; while the "darling" was playfully endeavouring to shatter the white jug, which had escaped scatheless, against the yellow mug, which had only lost the handle by the fall upon the clay floor.

"Oh, Lord!" exclaimed Cauth when she had recovered her breath.

Her mistress could only stare helplessly and bewildered at the small pig propelling the white jug against the yellow mug.

"You little devil!" cried Cauth, as she stuck the candle to the wall, unconscious of her own share in the catastrophe, "see what you're after doin'." And then Cauth made ineffectual efforts to apply the toe of her brogue to the small pig, without getting into the pail of thick milk. The small pig cleverly evaded these assaults

without suspending his efforts to smash the white jug against the yellow mug.

"Will you!—will you!—will you!" muttered Cauth through her clenched teeth, accompanying each "will you" with a kick, which barely fell short of the mark. Cauth seemed to think the spilt milk would be spoiled by the contact of her brogues—a notion which she also held in reference to the stripe of carpet between the parlour door and that of the bedroom opposite. Cauth's agility in getting to the bedroom and back again by a series of zig-zag jumps without once touching the carpet was something astonishing. But the ease with which the aggravating small pig kept out of the reach of her toe, while continuing the bombardment of the yellow mug with increasing vigour, so exasperated Cauth Manogue that she planted her left foot with a splash in the pool of thick milk for a final effort to send him flying through the door like a football. But her foot slipped and Cauth came down upon the clay floor with a thud, shooting the yellow mug against the wall with her heel as she descended. This was followed by a succession of hysterical screeches in an ascending scale, which brought Martin Dwyer to the dairy door with a look of curiosity, if not of alarm, in his pale, worn face. Comprehending the real state of affairs at a glance, Martin Dwyer quietly remarked that there was "no help for spilt milk," and returned to the kitchen—not sorry to think that Cauth and her mistress would probably find occupation in the dairy till bed time. The small pig on seeing the object of his assault lying prone before his nose, seemed to be suddenly infected with the general bewilderment, and stared at vacancy for several seconds, during which Cauth subsided into heavy breathing, and Mrs. Dwyer so far recovered her wits as to pull up her skirts and look at her shoes, which suggested wading ankle-deep through snow. The small pig was the first of the group to regain complete presence of mind. While Cauth was considering the possibility of getting up, without turning round on her hands and knees, he, thinking,

no doubt, that it was about time for him to make himself scarce, without giving any notice whatever of his intention, scampered through the door, having given a parting toss to the white jug. One minute afterwards the stars looked upon that small pig peacefully sleeping in the very midst of his eleven companions, the most innocent and harmless looking of the lot, showing no symptoms whatever of a troubled conscience. But there was neither peace nor rest for many an hour after for the "great woman for business" and her hand-maiden, Cauth Manogue—all owing to the small pig's genius for mischief. Heaven help Sub-Constable Joe Sproule if it shall be his lot to drive that small pig to pound when he grows up!

Tom Dwyer found his father engaged in a pleasant conversation with Con Cooney in the kitchen.

Con was in a much more cheerful mood than when we met him at Rody Flynn's some hours before. Mr. Cormack—whom he had met on the road, and whose information was always to be relied upon—had told him that there was a considerable rise in the price of young stock. This was good news for Con Cooney (who had three yearlings to sell) as well as for Martin Dwyer.

"Just at the right time for the May rent," said Con Cooney.

"Just at the right time," returned Martin Dwyer, striking his left hand with his right triumphantly.

"After all," thought young Tom Dwyer, looking into the old farmer's face, "is not his life as happy as any man's?"

"I may as well be gone," said Con Cooney, rising, and covering his wounded hand with his coat. "Joe 'ud be up before this if he could come at all. He said he'd run up to see his mother, if Father Feehan had no objection. But I suppose he thought he wouldn't be back in time. Good-night to ye."

Tom accompanied him to the turn of the road below the orchard, just, as he remarked, to pass away the time.

"See how I should forget this book that Julia gave

me for Miss Alice," Con remarked, when they had reached the breen by which he was to commence the ascent to his house. "But meetin' her father put it out of my head."

"She's gone back to school," said Tom Dwyer.

"No," returned Con carelessly; "she bid me good-evenin' when I was passin' the gate."

"It was her sister, I suppose," said Tom.

"The two of 'em wur there," Con replied, turning with his left hand to pull the book out of the right hand pocket of his coat.

"Are you shure?" Tom asked, with an animation that contrasted rather strongly with his previous indifference.

"Begor, I am," returned Con, too much occupied with the effort to get the book out of his pocket to notice the change of tone. "She asked me how my hand was gettin' on, and hoped my mother was strong. The sister, though a grand girl, is not like her at all. Here, you may as well take the book and send it over the next opportunity."

Tom Dwyer took the book, and looked across the river at the lighted drawing-room windows.

"I thought," he remarked, absently, "when I saw Margaret walking by herself that Alice was gone."

"Good-night," said Con Cooney, turning towards the narrow mountain road.

"Good-night, Con," Tom Dwyer replied, turning round. "You'll have a lonesome walk up there."

"I'd feel lonesomer on the road goin' into Corrigmore; I'm so used to it," he replied. "But what's that?" Con continued, looking with an expression of puzzled surprise towards the heather clad mountain, which at that place remained unreclaimed down to the road. Tom Dwyer turned round and saw a white object sliding swiftly down the hill-side; and before they had time to recover from their surprise a white greyhound sprang from the heather upon the road, greeting them with every manifestation of canine friendship and delight.

"'Tis Ponsonby's dog," said Con Cooney. "He's everywhere like the bad weather. The first word he said when I met him to-day was that he was goin' to give Rover to Mr. Armstrong. I told him I saw you an' Mr. Armstrong down the river, so I suppose he went round by Gurtinavalla, an' is on his way down."

They heard a clear, but not very shrill whistle, from the mountain side, and the white greyhound swept up through the heather again, and again returned, repeating the race, but with diminished distance—till his owner's tall figure was sufficiently near to be recognisable in the dim light.

"A darling hare," was Ponsonby's first remark on getting upon the road; "but he faced down the hill and made no run to speak of." And Ponsonby held up the hare by its hind legs between his friends and the still bright western sky. "I'm going to give Rover to Mr. Armstrong," Ponsonby ran on, in his excited way, apparently addressing the hill or the trees around him. "An' I'll give this fellow to Mrs. Cormack," he went on throwing the hare on his shoulder. "Miss Cormack is the beauty of the three parishes. Where can you find anyone to compare to her?" he asked, as if someone had interrupted him. "I know what beauty is as well as any man in Ireland. Didn't my father marry my mother for her beauty? And didn't my mother marry my father for his beauty? We are a beautiful family. It was given up to me to be the handsomest boy in the country. But Molly Dee says I was overlooked. 'Twas she nursed me; and 'twas in her house my mother died—up on the top of Knockgrana. Bob Dee is a half-natural. He never had much sense. He could bob for eels, that's all. He doesn't know what a snare is. I thought to teach him, but there was no use. But he's the devil for stealing. He'd steal all the cribs he could come at in the snow. That's all the good that's in Bob; except fishing for wothags with a fork. But Bob Dee couldn't track a hare even in the snow from this to the furze there. I never saw such a fool in my life as Bob Dee,

except for stealing and telling lies ; you might let out of him for that."

"Where will you stay to-night ?" Tom Dwyer asked, partly with the intention of putting a stop to poor Ponsonby's rigmarole, which he knew from experience, might, if not checked, run on indefinitely.

"At your father's," Ponsonby replied, as if it was the hill of Knockgrana had asked the question. "No one has such a welcome for me as Martin Dwyer, except Molly Dee. They're all very good. They'll say, 'Go in, Ponsonby, and get your dinner;' but you see there's something in Martin Dwyer's face and in Molly Dee's—I can't explain what it is. Some people think that dinners and money is everything. That's a great mistake. Rody Flynn has a pleasant look in his face too, but he says he knew a handsomer dog than Rover in the Queen's County."

"Rover will get you into trouble," said Con Cooney. "The sooner you give him to Mr. Armstrong the better. Good-night to ye. I must be off, or the old woman will be uneasy."

"Just think of what he says," Ponsonby remarked to the withered fir tree near Poul-na-copple, upon which the melancholy heron that looked so puny in old Martin Dwyer's eyes, had remained motionless until the sun had gone down, when he spread his wide wings and dropped silently into the marshy corner near the river. "Think of poor Rover getting anyone into trouble. He might as well say the youngest lamb on the mountain would get me into trouble as Rover."

But the white greyhound was destined to get not only poor George Ponsonby, but Con Cooney himself and Tom Dwyer into trouble ; far more serious trouble than any that could have resulted from going in pursuit of game without being duly licensed.

CHAPTER XVI.

TOM CHANGES HIS MIND—AN EVENING AT ROCKVIEW—
MR. O'KEEFFE TAKES A DECIDED STEP—ALICE'S SING-
ING—ON THE BRIDGE—THE OLD FARMHOUSE BY MOON-
LIGHT—ALICE DOES NOT THINK TOM DWYER A BIT
OF A HERO.

THE book which Con Cooney got out of his coat-pocket with so much trouble made Tom Dwyer fidgety. That blank look in his face when he saw Miss Cormack walking alone by the river, the wide-awake reader must have guessed by this time, was not correctly interpreted by Mr. Armstrong. His young friend Tom was not "hooked," as he imagined, at least by that particular angler, who possessed the rare accomplishment of "knowing how to walk." The interpretation of Tom Dwyer's look at that moment might be conveyed in the three short words, "Alice is gone!"

He knows now—for Con Cooney could not possibly have been mistaken—that Alice is not gone. At this very moment, he has no doubt, she is singing the old angler's favourite songs for him in that voice that would "make you tremble." And that fine gentleman, Mr. Robert O'Keeffe, is listening to her also—or pretending to listen; for Tom shrewdly suspects that it is not with musical *notes* Mr. Robert O'Keeffe's mind is most occupied when he visits Rockview House. Tom thinks that after all he had a right to go, particularly as Mr. Armstrong had promised to return to Corriglea and sleep in his old room instead of accepting Mr. Cormack's

offer of the covered car, or getting a seat from Father Feehan, who would have been glad of his company back to Shannaclough, and let him down safe and sound at the door of the quaint house with the red tiles—where Gillen, the old housekeeper, would have welcomed her master with even more than ordinary gladness, feeling convinced that, while sitting beside the parish priest himself, on his reverence's own car, Mr. Amby was all as one as within the pale of the true church. Tom Dwyer wonders at his stupidity for not having remembered this when Nannie and Nellie came out to the orchard to tell him to "get ready." Why it is quite possible that Mr. Armstrong may feel hurt and go home with Father Feehan. And his mother, who is hard at work with Cauth in the dairy—thanks to the small pig—thinks he went with the children. He may as well slip across the river—just to keep Mr. Armstrong in mind of his promise, and accompany him back—not the short way across the river, but over Corringlea bridge—to the old ivied farm-house.

The evening passed very agreeably, as indeed, evenings generally did at Mrs. Cormack's, and everybody looked happy and cheerful, when Tom Dwyer entered the drawingroom. Mrs. Cormack had asked Nannie and Nellie, with some disappointment, why Tom had not come; but no one seemed to miss him or think of him. There had been a little punch, and a little politics in the parlour—but not much of either. Father Feehan and Mr. O'Keeffe were a little dissatisfied with the turn things had taken in reference to the election. Lord Allavoga would feel hurt at his son's being obliged to make way for a mere plebeian; and the P.P. of Ballinsoggarth, who sneered at the P.P. of Shannaclough, as a Whig, would look upon the retirement of the Hon. Horatio as a triumph. Father Feehan was consequently not disposed to talk much on the subject; and the host had his own good reasons for wishing to avoid it altogether. Mr. Armstrong was not a politician at all, though supposed to be a sort of sentimental Tory. But he had been an

unconsciously close observer of the game, since the time his father took an active part, as one of the leading solicitors of the county, against the dreaded "Relief Bill," commonly known as "Catholic Emancipation," and the simple old disciple of Isaac Walton possibly had more knowledge of that game, and the varying phases he had seen it assume, than many of the players who made it their principal pursuit. Father Feehan inquired banteringly whether Mr. Armstrong "thought his friends the Tories would ever venture to raise their heads in the county again." And Mr. Armstrong replied, "Possibly yes; when the patriots were all completely provided for by the Whigs." Ned Cormack laughed at this in a way that made Father Feehan look grave. Mr. O'Keeffe, too, looked uncomfortable, and made his spoon twirl round upon the table, watching with great interest to see which way it would point when it stopped. There was silence for some time—everybody wishing to go to the drawingroom. Mr. Armstrong was under a spell since that clasp of the hand and that glad welcome in Alice Cormack's eye that greeted him among the geraniums in the glass porch when he arrived, with Nannie and Nellie, a little earlier than he was expected. Alice had run down from her room, having thrown the flower which she was about placing in her hair on the dressing-table. Oh, what a wondrous change since he had seen her last! And how that clasp reminded him of "a vanished hand!" Mrs. Cormack's greeting was more quiet, but not less cordial. And even Margaret welcomed him with a smile, in which there was not the slightest trace of scornfulness, and a graceful bending of her symmetrical figure, that quite contrasted with her usual "lofty condescension." But this change of manner was always noticeable in Miss Cormack when speaking to people of a certain class; and Mr. Armstrong though poor, was a gentleman by birth, and even recognised by "the gentry" as one of themselves. Margaret looked so perfectly beautiful this evening in her pale blue dress, that Mr. O'Keeffe so far forgot the

"big fortune" as to acknowledge to himself the possibility of his marrying her "without a penny," if he did not happen to want money so badly. He began to experience a sense of uneasiness lest his marrying her at all was not quite so much of a certainty as hitherto he had considered it. Something whispered to him that this beautiful creature who seemed to have no more thought of material things than the tulips that bowed to the evening star opposite the window, was nevertheless worldly-minded. Even that little exploit of Sammy Sloane's, if it reached her ears might alarm her; and it was only through her he counted upon succeeding with her father. Father Feehan had casually remarked to him that "her word was law" with Ned Cormack. So, as the pale gold ringlets disappeared through the parlour door, Mr. O'Keeffe formed the resolution that something definite should be done that very evening. He only waited for the first hint from his host to follow the pale-gold ringlets to the drawing-room. Mr. Armstrong awaited the same hint with perhaps greater impatience than that of the young lover. And all this time the host was quite as anxious as either to go to the drawing-room, because of a certain little curly head, which at that moment was bent over the frontispiece to the tragical history of "Cock Robin," which rested upon Nellie's knees, while Nannie pointed out how the arrow that pierced poor Robin's breast had been shot from the bow which the wicked sparrow grasped so firmly in his foot. Ned Cormack would fain have that curly head near enough to lay his hand upon it every hour of the day and night. So after that silence which followed Mr. Armstrong's remark about patriots and Whigs had continued for some minutes, Ned Cormack gave the desired hint, of which Mr. Armstrong availed himself with alacrity, Father Feehan with quiet gratification, and Mr. Robert O'Keeffe, judging from appearances, with indifference, if not reluctance.

Mrs. Cormack was with the children on the ottoman. Margaret reclined gracefully in a low chair turning over

the first monthly part of "Our Mutual Friend," which her mother had commissioned Tom Dwyer to bring from Ballycanis the last fair-day. Alice was at the piano waiting—and letting it be seen that she was waiting—to be asked to sing. If Margaret had been expecting to be asked to sing she would have sat as far as possible from the piano, and been so surprised when the request was made as to require a little time to remember what sort of a thing singing was. Well, Alice did sing. And Mr. Ambrose Armstrong listened with closed eyes, and felt an awakening of sensations within him which he thought were dead and buried before Alice was born. Even Mr. O’Keeffe turned his eyes from that perfect face upon which they had lingered, after wandering over the other graces of the fair form reclining in the low chair, and let them rest dreamily upon the singer. Tears rose to Nannie’s eyes as she listened; and Nellie placed one hand upon Eddy’s mouth, and the other upon the wicked sparrow, as if she feared he too might begin to chatter. There was no clapping of hands at the conclusion of Alice’s song, though Father Feehan did bring his palms into inaudible contact several times; and Alice struck a few chords and ran over a few bewildering snatches of melody as if to break the spell which she saw with delight had thrown at least one of the listeners into a trance.

Tom Dwyer was seated upon the corner of the ottoman with little Eddie astride upon his knees, almost before anyone was aware of his presence. The lady in the low chair was elaborately unconscious of his entrance; but Mrs. Cormack gave him a friendly nod, which seemed to say "’twas about time for you to make your appearance." Father Feehan, too, glanced in a friendly way towards Tom, and looked as if he wished to be talking to him about something; on observing which Mr. O’Keeffe took his thumb out of his waistcoat, and rather abruptly substituted a smile of recognition for the somewhat overdone stiffness of look and attitude which he had assumed on Tom’s entrance. But when Alice heard his

voice speaking to Mr. Armstrong, she turned quickly round, and fixed such a strange, inquiring, and even frightened look upon him that Tom did not know what to think of it; and Mr. Armstrong thought the look of mingled surprise, inquiry, and alarm was greatly reflected back from Tom Dwyer's dark eyes as he unconsciously turned them full upon Alice, who, as was her habit, was quite oblivious that anybody was taking the slightest notice of her. But Mr. Armstrong took note of Alice's look, just as he had taken note of Tom's look, when the pale gold ringlets were seen floating on the verge of the river.

"Ponsonby is in the kitchen," said Tom, resuming the conversation with Mr. Armstrong. "He brought a hare for Mr. Cormack."

"I suppose I had better get the poor fellow his supper," said Mrs. Cormack. "He brings me a great many rabbits; but I don't remember his bringing me a hare before. Do you think there is any danger that he'll be prosecuted for killing hares?"

"He's going to make Mr. Armstrong a present of his greyhound," returned Tom. "I think he has a dim sort of notion that he might be put to gaol. Someone must have frightened him. But he had his supper above, and is in a hurry back to have some talk with my father before he goes to bed. I showed him the way to get over the river, and he is delighted. He says he'll always come through the fields now, from Knockgrana to the mountain."

"Well," said Alice, who seemed relieved by Tom's cheerful manner, "I can now find out your secret. Ponsonby is a great friend of mine, and he will be more civil than you."

"Take care that you don't attempt to make use of it," returned Tom with mock gravity, "or you may drop into Poul-na-copple, as Margaret did long ago."

Alice looked scrutinisingly at her sister, who was toying with her curls and replying in monosyllables to Mr. O'Keeffe, who had drawn his chair sufficiently close to hers for a whispered conversation.

"I have been wishing," said Mr. O'Keeffe, turning over the leaves of "Our Mutual Friend," which he had taken from Miss Cormack's lap—"for an opportunity to speak to you alone."

"Yes!" returned Margaret, remarking the difference between Mr. O'Keeffe's and Tom Dwyer's hands.

"But perhaps it might be as well to say what I wish to say, here."

"Yes!" And Margaret raised her eyes to the gold studs in the spotless and creaseless shirt front.

"You must have observed that my visits have been rather frequent latterly."

"Yes." And Margaret, while seeming to be closely examining the tips of two of her curls, and comparing one with the other, was sadly remarking how white and regular Mr. O'Keeffe's teeth were.

"Well, I'll be plain. I had a motive in coming so often. I need say no more. You understand what I mean."

"Yes."

"And what do you say?"

"Oh, I'm not the only person to decide."

"Of course. But may I speak to your father?"

Margaret dropped her eyes, feeling faint and trembling, in spite of herself.

"What is your answer?" he asked with a quick, sharp glance, which seemed to have something of doubt and alarm in it, with possibly a flash of incipient anger.

"Yes," said Margaret faintly, as if compelled to repeat the little monosyllable over now, whether she would or no.

A flush of satisfaction suffused Mr. O'Keeffe's smooth red and white face as he closed the book, which he had pretended to be looking over, and laid it on the table.

There was triumph, too, in Margaret's blue eyes. But she could not conceal from herself that the pleasure she certainly did feel at that moment was not happiness. Alice saw that something out of the common had occurred between her sister and Mr. O'Keeffe. But a new thought

seemed to have struck her as she watched Tom Dwyer while he went on chatting pleasantly with her mother and Mr. Armstrong, without seeming to take any notice whatever of the *tete-a-tete* over "Our Mutual Friend."

"We thought we'd have you canvassing next week," said Mr. O'Keeffe. "Your name was given to the committee."

"Oh, I feel no great interest in the matter," Tom replied. "I'm very glad we have escaped a contest."

"By gad, so am I," said Ned Cormack, with his dry laugh, and rubbing his hands gleefully.

"Eddie, my man," said Father Feehan, "will you tell Joe Cooney to get the car?"

"Yes, it is time," Mr. O'Keeffe remarked, looking at his watch. Nannie and Nellie ran to the hall for Father Feehan's hat and muffler, while Alice helped him to put on his great coat.

"Such a pair of pretty little fairies," said Father Feehan, smiling, as he took the hat and muffler. "But really, Alice, I don't know what to think of you. You are quite tall enough now. But you must get a little stouter. However, I'm glad to see the colour has come back to your cheeks. Do you feel quite strong now?"

"Oh, yes," Alice replied; "I think I was never stronger. I did not feel the least tired after the walk to Shannaclough on Saturday. I expect to be as good a walker as mamma soon."

"I hope you will be as good every way," returned Father Feehan, as he shook hands with Mrs. Cormack.

"They are lovely little creatures," Mr. Armstrong remarked, with a motion of his head towards Nannie and Nellie.

"And very smart and intelligent," Mrs. Cormack replied. "You ought to speak to their mother to let them go to school more regularly. She seems to seize upon every excuse to keep them at home. She says she has been so nervous since the message came from the landlord that he would expect the tenants to vote as he desired, she should keep the children at home. So

they have not been at school for the last fortnight. The nuns spoke to me about it several times. But I really felt delicate in mentioning it to Mrs. Dwyer. It occurs to me now that you might be able to induce her to allow them to go regularly. 'Tis really a great pity; and the school is an excellent one. In fact the children would teach Margaret and Alice, English grammar and arithmetic and geography. The school is under the Board, as they say, and I think the system must be very good."

"So it is," returned Mr. Armstrong; "and I have observed that those good ladies are doing wonders. They have a nice little lending library, too."

"Did they get the children to sing for you?" Mrs. Cormack asked.

"It is wonderful!" Mr. Armstrong replied, with enthusiasm. "I was never so astonished. And the very poorest children look so bright and clean now—it is a pleasure to meet them on their way to and from school. I wish something could be done in the way of improving the dwellings of the poor. Without that I fear even the best system of education will fail to do all that it could do, if the people had comfortable houses to live in."

"Who is to build the houses for them?" Ned Cormack asked.

"You, and others like you—or perhaps the landlords," said Mr. Armstrong.

"What a notion the landlords have of doing it," returned Mr. Cormack, sarcastically.

"The law, of course, must compel them," rejoined Mr. Armstrong. "I see no great difficulty in the way if Government took the matter in hands. Will your Liberal candidate be of any use in such matters?"

"My Liberal candidate," replied Ned Cormack. "I don't believe in Liberal candidates or any other sort of candidates. They are all a pack of rascals."

"Oh, a great deal of good might be done for the country," said Mr. Armstrong. "But the people must be more intelligent than they are. However, I am not a politician; so I'll ask Alice to sing another song before I go."

"I was just going to ask you," said Mrs. Cormack, while Alice was turning over her music, "what you thought of the national school system in reference to religion."

"Well, the question is a difficult one," he replied. "Most people would wish that their children should get religious instruction at school. The system is practically denominational here, as you are all Catholics. And I believe it is the same among the Protestants and Presbyterians in many districts in the North. I'm inclined to think that when that state of things exists these vexatious restrictions upon religious instruction should be removed. The parliamentary people, however, are making capital out of this question. I say to Father Feehan that he already practically has denominational education; and I ask him, are the priests as earnest as they ought to be in getting the people to keep their children at school."

"The bishop says that they are not," said Ned Cormack. "His letter on that subject was very good. He attributed the backward state of education in the diocese to three causes—the inefficiency of the teachers, which is the natural result of insufficient pay; the indifference of parents in sending their children to school; and lastly, the carelessness and want of energy of the clergy. But the wonder is that we are not as ignorant as savages."

"Oh! why do you say that?" Mrs. Cormack asked.

"Do you forget the Penal Laws?" returned her husband.

"I understand you now," she rejoined with a smile.

"I thought first you meant to blame the priests."

"I read that letter of the bishop's," Mr. Armstrong remarked; "I think it must do good. But I would not like to be so hard on the priests," he continued, laughing, "as a Roman Catholic friend of mine, who said, when he read the letter, that if the bishop gave a shilling a head every Christmas morning to the parish priest for every child who attended school regularly during the year, his lordship would soon see a change for the better."

"People are too ready to talk in that way," said Mrs. Cormack. "The priests must live."

"I agree with you," returned Mr. Armstrong. "The Irish priest well earns what he gets. He is worthy of his hire, and no one ought to grudge it to him."

"Father Feehan says," Alice remarked, looking round—having found the song she wanted—"that Irish children are taught nothing of the history of their own country in the national schools."

"And did you ever learn anything of Irish history at your convent boarding school?" Mr. Armstrong asked, with a smile that made Alice think she had never seen so benevolent a face in her life.

"No," she replied; "I was never told anything about Irish history."

"I find it is the same in all the seminaries and colleges I have ever heard of which are conducted by Catholic clergymen," returned Mr. Armstrong. "And that's why I think they ought not to throw all the blame on the Government. Now Nellie and Nannie can recite more poetry of Moore's and other Irish poets than you can. And they have learnt it at a national school—for the nuns' school is under the Board of Education."

"I'll sing one of the melodies for you," said Alice.

"Yes, do," returned Mr. Armstrong, eagerly; "but it was not in your convent you learnt it."

Alice sang "Let Erin Remember the Days of Old" in a way that put Tom Dwyer into that condition which he described as "wondering what was coming over you."

Margaret rose from her chair, and stood by the piano. She felt shut out from the happy little group that had silently drawn closer to the singer, and seemed to wish to call their attention to her presence. And in truth she was overlooked and forgotten. She saw that even the children turned their eyes upon her with indifference. Margaret felt uneasy, and looked at her sister with a little frown, remembering that even Mr. O'Keeffe seemed to have forgotten her while Alice was singing. With an almost angry glance at Tom Dwyer, who leant upon

the back of a chair with his hand pressed over his eyes, Margaret sailed out of the room, Mr. Armstrong alone having a faint consciousness that the pale blue robe and the golden ringlets had vanished from the scene.

Half an hour later Mr. Armstrong was standing upon Corriglea bridge. Of course he could not pass the bridge without stopping—particularly as the moon was up, and the “little bird” was singing, singing somewhere or everywhere among the hazels. Nannie and Nellie always spoke of that untiring little night minstrel as the “little bird.” But one would think that Mr. Armstrong heeded neither the silver moon that looked up at him from the river, nor the song of the “Irish Nightingale” from among the hazel bushes; for after some minutes of silence he remarked, absently, “She is very like her aunt, Tom.”

“The same thought was in my own mind, sir,” Tom Dwyer replied, “though I can’t remember her at all.”

“Is it the little bird, Mr. Armstrong?” Nellie asked in surprise.

“No, my dear,” he replied gravely; “that’s the willow wren, a very sweet little songster.”

“Didn’t I know it was not the king-fisher,” said Nannie. “You always wanted to persuade me ’twas the king-fisher.”

“But you said it was the bull-finch from the orchard,” retorted Nellie.

“I only said maybe it was,” returned Nannie.

“There are two splendid bull-finches in the orchard this year, Mr. Armstrong.”

“Sure the hen is not splendid,” said Nannie.

“But I saw two with red breasts at the same time. One on the wall near the seat, and the other on the lowest branch of the white moss-tree.”

“I’d rather the king-fisher,” said Nellie.

“We’ll be on the look-out for them in the morning,” Mr. Armstrong interposed. “We’ll try and get a look at both the king-fisher and the bull-finches. I once had a bull-finch that could whistle part of a tune quite correctly; but he never got his red breast. Let us go

through the meadow, unless you fear to get your feet wet by the dew on the grass."

"Oh, no," the two little girls replied; "we can walk on the path."

"Does not the old house look very nice, with the ivy shining in the moonlight?" Mr. Armstrong remarked, when they had got out again upon the road.

"I think it is the nicest old house in the world," said Nannie, looking fondly up at the old farm-house. "I wouldn't give it for the grandest palace ever was."

Tom and Mr. Armstrong exchanged looks involuntarily. They remembered their conversation of the afternoon, and the thought of these two little creatures driven for ever from that dear old home, again pierced like a sharp sword through the heart of Ambrose Armstrong—and even Alice Cormack's singing was forgotten.

Just at that same moment Alice took her hand from under her cheek, and laughed.

"Why do you laugh?" her sister asked, quietly.

"I'll tell you then," returned Alice. "Tom Dwyer does not care a pin about you."

"What put it into your head to think he did?" Margaret asked.

"I don't know, but it was always in my mind," returned Alice. "I was afraid he'd be unhappy."

"Why so?" her sister asked.

"Oh, you know why," said Alice.

"What do you think of Mr. O'Keefie?" Margaret asked, rather doubtfully.

"I don't know what to think of him. I couldn't depend on him. I'd be cautious if I were you."

"He has proposed," said Margaret, in a low, but emphatic tone.

"And what did you say?" Alice asked, looking rather frightened.

"I said 'Yes,'" was the reply.

"And what will papa and mamma say?" Alice continued.

"Oh, that's a mere matter of detail," Margaret

replied with indifference. "Of course they knew why he was coming here, and if they had any objection to him they would at least have given him some hint of it."

"I hope it will be for the best, Margaret," said Alice, after some moments of thoughtful silence. "But I am glad, at all events," she added, brightening up again, "that I was mistaken about Tom Dwyer. I'd be so sorry for him—he is such a good-hearted poor fellow."

"Ah," said their mother, who had just come into the room, "you don't know Tom Dwyer at all."

"Well, I'm afraid he has not a bit of the hero in him," returned Alice, laughing; "though jumping into Poul-na-copple in his corduroy jacket and trousers was a very good beginning. But nothing has come of it," she added with a sly glance at Margaret.

"And what were you saying about him?" Mrs. Cormack asked.

"Margaret must tell you that," Alice replied.

"He forgot to give you this book," said her mother.

"He sent it in by Jemmy."

"'Tis one I lent Julia Flynn," said Alice. "I wonder where did he get it."

CHAPTER XVII.

MR. ARMSTRONG IS AWAKENED BY THE CAWING OF THE
ROOKS—WHAT HE THINKS OF IT.

THE rooks in the tall elms at the end of the old farmhouse next the orchard were in full chorus when Mr. Armstrong opened his eyes next morning. He had been listening between asleep and awake to the crowing of the cock, thinking drowsily that Davy Lacy's one-eyed rooster had wonderfully improved in voice, and quite got rid of a certain discordant harshness of tone which used to affect Mr. Armstrong's nerves disagreeably during his illness. Over and over again did he make up his mind to tell Rody Flynn, the very next time he came to shave him, of the misery inflicted upon him by his friend's one-eyed cock—knowing that he need but mention his trouble to Rody Flynn to ensure its discontinuance. But when Rody did come again, the fear of hurting the feelings of the melancholy shoemaker kept Ambrose Armstrong silent, and made him resolve to endure the torment for another while in the hope that in the end, as Murty Magrath assured himself in the case of his wife's tongue—he'd become so used to it as not to mind it. But as Mr. Armstrong opened his eyes, awakened by the hoarse but not unpleasant clamour among the elm trees, he became conscious of the fact that the full-toned clarion to which he had been listening did not belong to Davy Lacy's one-eyed cock at all, and that he was now in the "loft" in the old farmhouse where in boyhood he used to conceal himself among the fleeces of wool and bundles of flax to read and dream in "peace and quiet."

ness" When his kind friend Mrs. Dwyer—not the present Mrs. Dwyer, it is scarcely necessary to point out—found him lying so often with his book near the low window, she proposed to her husband to have a room taken off the loft, and a window sufficiently high to read or write by, without lying on the floor, made in the gable, looking out upon the orchard, for the agent's son, towards whom that kind-hearted woman had come to feel all the love of an Irish foster-mother. A fire-place, too, was discovered in the gable, greatly to the surprise of everybody, packed tightly with hard turf and plastered over, so that the existence of such a convenience was never suspected even by the oldest inhabitant of the old farmhouse. This story of the fire-place and the turf, when related in after years by Molly Manogue to the present Mrs. Dwyer, of Corringlea, so filled the mind of the "great woman for business" with visions of old guineas hid in the wall, that she was often seen going round and round the loft, tapping the rough plastering with her knuckles and listening for a hollow sound that might reveal a hidden recess, or cupboard with a few heaps of bags of those broad, thin, gold pieces, thirteen of which, Molly Manogue informed her, had fallen from the thatch of Ned Cormack's old house when the roof was being stripped off. "But these Cormacks were always lucky," Mrs. Dwyer would say to herself as she tapped upon the rough plastering. "I'll engage if I was knocking down my house thirteen guineas wouldn't fall down to me, as it is I that wants it."

The room on the loft, however, was but rarely occupied by Ambrose Armstrong since Martin Dwyer's marriage. After his father's death, Mr. Armstrong's mother came to live with her sister, who was also a widow, in the old house at Shannaclough; and Mrs. Armstrong found it easy enough to persuade her second son to spend his days with her and her sister within an hour's walk of Corringlea. His elder brother, a clever attorney and wide-awake man of the world, approved of and encouraged the arrangement—partly because he considered

Amby unfit for his father's and his own profession, and partly, perhaps, because of certain pecuniary advantages to himself. So, though Mr. Armstrong very often called in to see Mrs. Dwyer, and seldom or never returned home from the river without having a chat with his old friend Martin in the long meadow—and, for several years previous to his late illness, with young Tom Dwyer on the bridge—nothing less than an unusually heavy and continuous downpour of rain could keep the angler over night at the ivied farmhouse. No wonder, then, that the panorama of his quiet life should pass before him with unusual vividness, while he listened to the cawing of the rooks and the mingled sounds of the farm-yard, as he had listened to them in boyhood. Tom had hung the basket and fishing-rod in their old place over the book-shelf which Ellen Dwyer had helped to put up the very next day—which happened to be unsuited for angling—after that Friday evening when the agent returned home from Corringlea filled with misgivings for his son, exposed as the young man was to a new and undreamt of danger in the old farmhouse—a danger, in the eyes of Attorney Armstrong, compared with which “The Complete Angler” and Percy's Reliques were mere trifles. Ambrose Armstrong, as his eyes rest on the book-shelves, can almost cheat himself into the belief that it was to Aileen Cormack's singing he had been listening the night before; and that Ellen Dwyer will rally him upon his sentimental look when he goes down to breakfast, and predict his returning this afternoon with another empty basket. He recalls the calm summer night when he stood, for the last time, upon the bridge, with Aileen listening to the “little bird,” and thinking what a blissful life of peace and quietness his would be if Aileen was his wife and that old thatched house by the river their home. He had almost made up his mind to confess his love, when Ellen Dwyer, after saying good-night to Ned Cormack in the meadow, called out to him that it was time to return home.

That was the last time he ever saw Aileen Cormack.

Then came the quiet years with his mother in the old house in the village. These were years of almost perfect happiness. For whenever he felt the shadow of sadness, or discontent stealing upon him, he had only to look into his mother's face and it was gone. Then came the time of utter gloom when he felt that he was alone in the world. He shuddered as he recalled the first winter after his mother's death. How anxiously and nervously he used to listen for Rody Flynn's knock at the door! Rody noticed something in Mr. Armstrong's face one day that alarmed him. He knew a man in the Queen's County—he told his friend Davy Lacy—who had the same look, and that man went out of his mind. He inquired of Gillen, the servant, whether Mr. Amby "used to moan in his sleep" (the man in the Queen's County moaned in his sleep) and Gillen answered that "'twould break your heart to be listenin' to him." This decided Rody Flynn. He asked Mr. Armstrong one night whether he could lend him Goldsmith's Works.

"Yes," Mr. Armstrong replied, going to his book-case. "But which of his works do you want?"

"Mr. Sweeny has a book," returned Rody Flynn, "with bits and scraps from different authors; an' he read some things that he told me were by Oliver Goldsmith. An' ever since I have a great wish to know how it all goes together. The schoolmaster was mighty well described," added Rody Flynn, with that raising of the eyebrows and lighting up of the countenance peculiar to him when under the influence of suddenly awakened pleasurable emotion. "In some respects that schoolmaster reminded me of Paddy Flinn, that I went to on the hill of Knockeraun. An' the big words was just the same," added Rody Flynn delightedly.

"Well, you have it all in this," said Mr. Armstrong, handing him the book.

"Is it the 'Traveller'?" Rody asked, holding the book close to the candle.

"No," Mr. Armstrong replied. "You'll find it in 'The Deserted Village.'"

"Aye, I have it," Rody Flynn remarked, drawing the candle near his elbow. "But 'tis very curious I never could get any satisfaction from poetry by readin' it myself. Some wan that knows how to read it right should read it for me. Poetry is nothing unless you have the right method of readin' it. I couldn't do it myself even in my own mind. An' I'd as soon be listenin' to an old wall fallin' as listenin' to some people readin' poetry. Read a few lines of it for me." Mr. Armstrong took the book, and sighed wearily. But Rody Flynn's expectant look appealed to his good nature; and drawing a long breath he commenced to read "The Deserted Village," nervously, and in a scarcely audible tone at first; but soon his voice became steady, and its soft, measured cadences fell so sweetly upon Rody Flynn's ear that it was only by an effort he could fix his attention on the meaning of the words, so charmed was he by the mere music of the reader's voice. While the reader, having almost every line of the poem by heart, turned his eyes alternately from the page to his listener's face as he went on, deriving a two-fold pleasure from his task—the pleasure reflected from Rody Flynn's face sometimes seeming to excel what was due to the poet, as the moon in the river at Corriglea bridge used to seem brighter to him than the moon in the sky.

"I never heard the like of it!" was Rody Flynn's exclamation, as Mr. Armstrong closed the book. "But there's something lonesome in it. 'Tis like an ould Irish air."

"So it is," said Mr. Armstrong, looking into the fire. "There's a sense of loss in it, and that is always saddening."

"I wouldn't know now where the school on Knockeraun was," said Rody Flynn, "only for the stump of wan ould crab-tree. I stop to look at it every time I pass by; an' 'tis terrible lonesome to think of the change. What would we do," Rody Flynn added, "if there was no world but this? 'Tis a great blessin' to have another

world," he added with a triumphant look that made Mr. Armstrong smile.

"Won't you take the book?" Mr. Armstrong asked, as Rody Flynn stood up from his chair.

"I have no wan to read it for me," was the reply.

"Well, come down to-morrow night again and I'll read for you," said Mr. Armstrong.

This was just what Rody Flynn wanted. Night after night, during the rest of the winter, Amby Armstrong waited anxiously for the little cooper's knock at his door. Several other old favourites besides Goldsmith—Isaac Walton among the number—were taken from the book-case. Rody Flynn attended to the fire and kept it blazing pleasantly; but it was only after a good deal of practice that he was able to use the snuffers instead of his finger and thumb, without quenching the candle. How quickly those candles burned down to the socket! Larry Foley's shop was usually closed when Rody Flynn passed over the bridge on his way home; and once or twice he quickened his pace, remarking to himself that it must be "all hours," on finding that silence and darkness reigned even in the forge of Quin, the nailer. Gillen soon reported that the moanings in the night had ceased altogether, and Rody observed, with great satisfaction, that he never could detect the "least sign" of that strange vacant look in Mr. Armstrong's face—even though he might continue gazing for several minutes into the fire before resuming the reading, interrupted by the quenching of the candle, or the attempt to snuff it, with the curious brass instrument, in the use of which it took Rody Flynn several week's practice to perfect himself. How short that winter seemed to Ambrose Armstrong, in spite of the loneliness of his home! He remembered now his first day at the river the following spring. 'Twas not a good day for the angler. There was a touch of frost in the clear exhilarating air. But the "wo!" of the ploughman, as his horses reached the headland, was pleasant to hear. And still pleasanter was the bleat of the young lambs, the first he had seen that

year. Mick Connell has just cried "wo!" to the horse he is putting to the cart in the yard (the drawing of the lime, suspended by the threatened contested election, is to be resumed to-day), and Nannie and Nellie's pet lambs are waiting their warm milk, early as it is. Perhaps this is why Mr. Armstrong recalls so vividly the voice of the ploughman and the bleating of the first young lambs on that bright day in March long ago! But what has recalled the daffodils in the parson's lawn so distinctly? Yes, there is a bank of daffodils in Ned Cormack's lawn near the river. But, as he remarked while standing on the bridge yesterday, "their glory is departed for this year at least." Still, the fact that he had turned his head on his pillow and was looking through the low window at that dark green patch in the corner of Ned Cormack's lawn, explained naturally enough the startling vividness with which the daffodils in the parson's lawn flashed before his mind's eye, as he saw them on that memorable March day long ago—memorable, for it was the first time he returned from the river to the old house and had no one to welcome him. He could hardly muster courage to knock at the door. He felt a sense of suffocation as he hung up his hat, fishing-rod and basket, in the hall. But Rody Flynn was down a full hour earlier than usual that evening. At this point in his reverie Mr. Armstrong dropped asleep with a placid smile upon his pale handsome face. The old clock in the parlour was striking eight when he awoke, exclaiming, "Oh, Rody, you have all the daffodils quenched."

"I hope you slept well, sir," said Tom Dwyer, who had just entered the room, and stood between the sleeper and the light.

"Yes, Tom," was the reply; "and I have just been dreaming," he added with an amused smile, "that Rody Flynn was clipping off the heads of the daffodils with my old brass snuffers. Before I dropped off to sleep I had been recalling the time when he used to quench the candle while I was reading Goldsmith for him. What sort of a day is it?"

"A splendid morning," Tom replied, moving aside from the window, "but 'twill be too bright for the river. Oh," he added with a look of surprise, "there's the greyhound running at full speed along the bank. Yes, he's over the stile and across the bridge. And, by George! there he is in the lawn on the other side, facing back again. I suppose he's looking for Ponsonby. I had a right to tie him up till he gets used to the place."

Mr. Armstrong had raised himself on his elbow, and watched the white greyhound sweeping along the meadow, with evident delight. And as the dog was hidden for a moment behind the hazel bushes on the river bank, both Mr. Armstrong and Tom Dwyer saw that Alice Cormack was standing outside the glass porch, watching the race, with her dark hair flowing over her shoulders, and her white hand shading her eyes from the sun.

"I'll be down in ten minutes, Tom," said Mr. Armstrong, grasping the counterpane, as if he were about jumping out of bed like a schoolboy on the first holiday morning. "I hope no harm will happen to Rover."

"I'll run down to the river and bring him back," Tom Dwyer replied, carelessly. "I can cross Poul-nacopple, but I suppose I must come back by the bridge with the dog. Don't hurry yourself, sir; they were only turning the cream-cake on the griddle when I was coming up."

Ambrose Armstrong did jump out of bed with an agility that surprised himself. When dressed, he looked in the old oval looking-glass, and was astonished again. Why if it were not for the silver hair that fresh smooth face might be the face of a young man. And there was a beaming brightness in it too that reminded him of Rody Flynn. How often during the past three years had he said to himself, with a resigned sigh, that he'd never again cast a line upon the river at Corringlea. And, after all, was the evening to be the very brightest part of

his life ? He experienced a feeling of sadness the night before while Miss Cormack sang,

"Give me back, give me back the wild freshness of morning ;
Its clouds and its tears were worth evening's best light."

Alice is crossing the lawn now towards the river ; and as his eyes follow her the same feeling comes upon him.

But now the feeling of sadness is caused, not by regret that the wild freshness of morning is gone, but by the thought that the evening which seems to promise so brightly must necessarily be so brief.

"I am old ; I am old !" murmured Amby Armstrong, "And yet," he added, "is it not strange I never thought I was old while I was limping about with my crutch, and never hoping to have the use of my limbs again ? I suppose it is when one gets young that one is sorry to be old."

CHAPTER XVIII.

MR. ARMSTRONG, SEEING ALICE AND THE WHITE GREY-HOUND ON THE RIVER-BANK, PRONOUNCES HER TO BE ONE OF DIANA'S LOVELIEST NYMPHS—PONSONBY SELLS THE PASS.

THE cream-cake was a great success, and Mrs. Dwyer was breathlessly happy. Strong emotions of whatever sort generally interfered with Mrs. Dwyer's aspirations. Mr. Armstrong, mindful of the hint he had got from Mrs. Cormack, thought the opportunity a good one, while the happy woman was filling out his second cup of tea, to introduce the subject of the school at Ballinsoggarth. He dwelt upon the great advantage of a good education, and wondered at the carelessness of some parents in the matter.

"What you say is true," said Martin Dwyer, looking at Nannie and Nellie, who seemed very grave, as if Mr. Armstrong had been reading them a lecture.

"So it is," their mother remarked complacently, never dreaming that her own remissness was glanced at, or even suspected.

"I hope Nannie and Nellie attend school regularly," said Mr. Armstrong.

"Oh, quite regularly," Mrs. Dwyer answered, impressively—"except," she added, seeing the children raise their eyes and look at her in astonishment—"except when I can't spare them."

"Spare them, Mrs. Dwyer," returned Mr. Armstrong. "Surely nothing they could do for you is of so much importance as their education."

"I have no one to do anything for me," rejoined Mrs. Dwyer, pitifully. "No one but that Cauth Manogue; and I believe she wouldn't stay with me if anybody else would take her. All the good girls I ever had left me as soon as ever they could get another place. And see how they stay with Mrs. Cormack. Though she never lets 'em be idle for a minute, and must know where they spend their time whenever they go out. Yet, except when they get married, they never leave her."

"And what can the children do for you?" Mr. Armstrong asked.

"Many little things," replied Mrs. Dwyer. "And besides I do be so lonesome and nervous, my mind becomes quite confused, and everything goes wrong."

"Well, Mrs. Dwyer," said Mr. Armstrong gravely, "if anyone else told me that you could not afford to send your children to school I could not believe it."

"Afford to send my children to school!" exclaimed Mrs. Dwyer, surprised and offended. "Don't I pay for their schooling, whether they go or not?"

"Yes; but you say you can't spare them for want of a servant. And it is a great loss to them. Indeed, keeping children of their age from school is an irreparable loss. It never can be made up to them. They'll feel it all the days of their life."

"I'm sure," returned Mrs. Dwyer, quite frightened, "they can go to school every day of the week if they like; but the distance is so long."

"Oh! we only find it so pleasant," said Nellie. "We don't be a bit tired."

"What Mr. Armstrong says is true," said Martin Dwyer. "I never looked into it before."

"Well, they can begin on Monday," returned his wife.

"And I'm sure I'll never ask them to stay at home again," she added, fixing her eyes on Nannie and Nellie, as if she thought them very inconsiderate and ungrateful children for looking so glad and happy at being allowed to go to school regularly.

"Well, schools must be different from what they used

to be in my time," Martin Dwyer remarked, with an amused look at the two happy little girls. "'Tis glad they are instead of heartbroken. I remember how sorry we all were when the schoolmaster recovered from the ague long ago. Murty Magrath said that the recording angel kept an account of every time he ever made the schoolboys shake, and that for every shake a shake would be taken out of him before he got over the ague. So that some of us thought the account was so big he'd never be able to clear the score; but weren't we sorry when school was opened again!"

"Nannie and Nellie don't feel that way about school," said Mr. Armstrong, with a smile. "The nuns don't frighten people, I am sure."

"Oh, no, sir!" the children answered in a breath,—Nellie adding, "we are never so happy as while we are at school."

"Murty Magrath came in yesterday morning while you were at the forge to light his pipe," Mrs. Dwyer remarked; "I hate the sight of him. He always reminds me of a process, or a notice to quit or something. See what a nice little man Sammy Sloane is. I declare, when he handed me that process for the things I bought at the new shop, and forgot to pay for, being so confused about everything, you'd think it was a present he was making me, he spoke so nice and civil. I couldn't help asking him into the parlour and giving him a glass. But that other long gomerall, with his neck like a gander, I declare he always frightens me."

"I wonder what brought Murty over in this direction," said her husband, looking grave. "I didn't hear of anything going on about here."

"He said he was going over to Glenmoynan," returned Mrs. Dwyer, "and that he had the divil of a job before him."

"It must be only a civil bill decree, I suppose," Martin Dwyer remarked, after a minute's thought.

"He seemed to be disappointed," said Mrs. Dwyer,

"when I told him you were gone from home. I was afraid of my life he wanted to serve you with something. But when he was going away he said the man of this house once did him a good turn, and if he ever had the opportunity he wouldn't forget it."

"Did he mean that as a threat?" Mr. Armstrong asked, looking earnestly at his old friend.

"No," answered Martin Dwyer, smiling. "Con Cooney's father and I saved him from a terrible whacking one night, nearly thirty years ago, and we coming home from the fair of Carrigmore. He was waylaid by a party from the slate quarry, that were on the watch for him for a long time. We knew he deserved it, but we were afraid they'd kill him; and as he was an old school-fellow of ours, we took his part, and they said they'd let him pass that time, in compliment to us. When he was parting us at the cross-roads after, he said 'twas the first time in his life he ever met a man to stand his friend, and that if it ever came to his turn he'd prove to us that a bailiff could be grateful."

"He's a very clever man," Mr. Armstrong remarked, "and yet he's always in poverty."

"He was always a terrible schemer," returned Martin Dwyer. "He was a first-rate workman, but everyone got tired of him: he took such delight in humbugging people. My father had him reaping one time, and when the men were going out one day after their dinner Murty began to tell my father a story. The story was so interesting they all stopped to listen to it, before they commenced to work, thinking every minute he was coming to the end of it. My father sat down against the ditch and told him to finish the story. 'Twasn't long till all the reapers—fifteen of them, I think—were sitting down listening to Murty's story. Anyway my father didn't feel the time passing till Murty stood up and said 'Good-evening, sir, I believe 'tis time to go home.' So it was, for the sun was just setting, and the half day was lost. 'Good-evening, sir,' said Murty, again, looking very innocent. 'Good-evening,' said my father;

'but I won't want you to-morrow.' He never gave Murty a day's work after."

"When that unfortunate Paddy Fitzsimons, the bailiff, was shot," said Mr. Armstrong, "I went with the crowd to see what had happened. I could not believe the report that he was shot from the window of a Protestant gentleman's house—a landlord himself—whose cattle he was driving."

"Yes," interrupted Martin Dwyer; "'twas for the head rent, and the property was in Chancery."

"Well," continued Mr. Armstrong, "there was the unfortunate bailiff lying stone dead on his back in the avenue. 'Twas a horrible sight, and the people looked awe-struck when they saw him—even some who shouted for joy when they heard of it first. The bullet passed through his eyebrow, quite close to the eye. But when Murty Magrath was seen approaching, the crowd, which was every moment becoming larger, drew aside and made way for him. They seemed to think that he must have a brotherly feeling for the dead bailiff, and sympathised with him accordingly, as he stood over the corpse with his hands under his coat tails. 'Glory be to God!' was Murty's pious exclamation, as he gazed on the dead man's face. 'Didn't his eye escape wonderful?'"

"I never thought he was pious," said Mrs. Dwyer.

"I have known Murty Magrath to do kind acts," continued Mr. Armstrong, putting his handkerchief to his mouth. "He's not so hardened as he pretends to be."

"He is not," returned Martin Dwyer, throwing back his head and laughing, more at his wife's literal construction of the word "pious" as applied to Murty Magrath, than at the cynical humour which prompted the ejaculation concerning the eye of his unlucky confrere. "The fact is," added Mr. Armstrong, "the fellow has a sort of humour and he can't resist the opportunity to exercise it."

"Did you find the greyhound, Tom?" Mr. Armstrong asked, as Tom Dwyer took his place at the table,

looking flushed and out of breath, as if he had had a fast run to be in time for breakfast.

"Not a sign of him," was the reply. "Alice told me he went through the grove; so I suppose he followed Ponsonby, who crossed over Poul-na-copple. Rover doesn't like the water, and the river was too wide for a spring; and that explains the way he ran round by the bridge."

"He would never do so for me," said Martin Dwyer, rising briskly from his chair. "I suppose you'll stay to dinner, Amby?"

"Oh, no," Mr. Armstrong replied. "I'll push slowly backwards, and get home at my leisure. I'll only ask Tom to come as far as the bridge first to put my line through the rings."

An hour later, as Mr. Armstrong, rod in hand, and basket on back, was bidding Nannie and Nellie good-bye over the gate of their little flower garden, Nellie exclaimed in surprise—

"Oh, there is Alice in our meadow."

So it was; and waving her hat to attract their attention.

"And here is Ponsonby coming up the meadow, backwards, and blowing his whistle," said Nannie.

"Yes," Tom remarked, "I guessed the greyhound followed him. There he is in the lawn; he doesn't know what to do to get across the river. 'Tis too wide for a jump, and he doesn't like the water." The white greyhound stood upon the bank, looking wildly after the retreating figure in the green shooting jacket, and hare-skin cap, seeming too fascinated by the sound of the whistle to think of availing himself a second time of the bridge. He went as if to make the spring at all hazards, as Ponsonby, still moving backwards up the meadow, blew a longer and clearer note, but again straightened his limbs, erecting his graceful neck, and gazing wildly towards the whistler, but remaining as motionless as a white marble statue. Another piercing note, and poor Rover became quite distracted. He looked all around, as if seeking for assistance, ran

frantically about the lawn, turning and twisting as if in pursuit of an imaginary hare, finally coming back to the river bank, and standing erect and motionless as before. He then crouched upon the bank, and letting his fore-paws slowly into the river—deeper, deeper, but scarcely with a shiver, as a little wavelet splashed against his proud chest.”

“Oh, she’s back again,” said Nellie, on seeing Alice Cormack by the side of the white greyhound, with her hand against the side of his head.

“Look at that, Tom,” exclaimed Mr. Armstrong, delightedly. “There’s a picture! There’s a group! She’s one of Diana’s loveliest nymphs! And the snow-white greyhound! No artist could imagine anything more perfectly beautiful. I’m very thankful to you Ponsonby, for giving me that dog.”

“I don’t know how he got across the river,” returned George Ponsonby, who by this time had crossed the meadow and got out upon the road—looking very earnestly as he spoke at the crows in the tall elm trees. “I blew the whistle after getting over Poul-na-copple, the way Tom showed me last night. I was never thinking of him; but to my surprise when I got through the grove and went up to leap into the rushy field, who should be by my side but Rover. I came back again with him; but you see he won’t face the river. That’s what surprises me—how did he get across after me? Miss Alice is very proud of Rover, and he’s very fond of her. See how he leans his head against her arm.”

“I’ll tie him up till he gets used to the place,” said Tom Dwyer.

“Tie him up,” returned Ponsonby. “Not at all. He’d never stir only for the whistle. Don’t I leave him at Mick Shea’s? I only have to say ‘stay here, Rover, till I come for you,’ and he’ll stay as quiet as a lamb. But nothing could stop him when I blow the whistle. See how he looks up into her face. That’s because he’s in misery and wants her to comfort him. Sure there’s not a bone in his body that I don’t know. ’Tis sur-

prising," added Ponsonby, turning his lustrous brown eyes towards the bridge, and raking his black beard with his long thin fingers. "'Tis surprising how like the Christians the dogs are—only the dogs are better-natured, except a few. There's some Christians I know," added Ponsonby, but with considerable hesitation and uncertainty, "that would not let it go with any dog, but not many."

"Come on to the bridge," said Mr. Armstrong, laughing at Ponsonby's concession in favour of "the Christians," "and Rover will come to us."

"I am wondering why he never thought of the bridge," returned Ponsonby. "But Miss Alice bothered him. She made me show her how to get over Poul-na-copple; 'tis quite safe and easy when you'd know how to find the crooked bough. But you see there's something bothering about Miss Alice. I'd feel it myself when she'd be talking to me. She looks straight into your face, and—there's something I can't describe in it," added Ponsonby, quite solemnly, as his wandering eyes rested for a moment upon Alice Cormack, who seemed to be directing the greyhound's attention to the bridge—"I can't describe it; but some girls are bothering, and Miss Alice is one of them. That's why Rover could not think of the bridge."

"Didn't I tell you not to tell anybody how to cross over Poul-na-copple?" Tom asked:

"My God" exclaimed Ponsonby, turning quickly round, and looking in indignant astonishment at Tom Dwyer, "Tom, how could I help it? I couldn't think of anything but just to do whatever she'd ask me. I hope she'll never ask me to throw myself into Poul-na-copple," he went on, dreamily, "as I don't know how to swim."

"I suppose it was all Rover's fault," returned Tom Dwyer, laughing. "Only for being obliged to come back with him you would not have met Miss Alice."

"Of course I wouldn't," said Ponsonby. "These things turn out very queer. So many things happen that wouldn't happen only that something else happened,

that it puzzles my brain to explain it. I do be thinking of these things while the world is asleep, and Bob Dee snoring like Tom Quinn's bellows. But I can't come at it at all to my satisfaction. And things that you'd think the unkindest things that could happen to you, might turn out to be the kindest." Ambrose Armstrong remembered these words in after years, and asked himself was this poor crazy fellow gifted with a sort of second sight? Many a time was the remark made in Mr. Armstrong's hearing, that George Ponsonby's white grey-hound "was an unlucky dog to Tom Dwyer." But had it not been for the white grey-hound, Alice Cormack might never have learned the secret of crossing over the "Pool of the Horse," and, . . . but it is better to wait till the occurrence, we were on the point of blurting out before its time, comes to pass in the regular and natural course of events.

"You sold the pass on me," said Tom Dwyer, shaking his head.

"For Heaven's sake, don't say that," returned Ponsonby, twisting his fingers in his flowing beard. "Do you want to compare me to Bob Dee? I tell you her voice and her eyes put everything out of my head, except just to do what she asked me."

CHAPTER XIX.

HOW THE SUMMER MONTHS PASSED—JOE SPROULE'S DISTRESSING DREAMS—MRS. CORMACK AND ALICE HURRY AWAY FROM THE ORCHARD—MR. ARMSTRONG DROPS A FLOWER, AS IF BY ACCIDENT, ON A CERTAIN GRAVE EVERY LADYDAY.

THE summer months passed away pleasantly enough, for nearly all the people, young and old, with whom we have been concerned in the parish of Shannaclough—always excepting Cauth Manogue and her mistress, who were seldom without their troubles. We must also except Sub-Constable Joe Sproule, who, as his friend and superior officer, Acting-Constable Finucane feelingly expressed it, “got pigs on the brain,” in consequence of the sufferings, mental and bodily, inflicted upon him by the fates and Murty Magrath, on that busy day in the merry month of May, when, with the zeal befitting an active officer, he, Joe Sproule, took charge of the lean pigs at the cross of Glenmoynan.

Joe Sproule was an altered man after that eventful day. To his distempered imagination every pig was a black pig, and every sound a grunt. He used to cry out in his sleep too, that the black pig had seized him and was hanging on to him.

“I can’t stand this,” whimpered the sergeant’s wife, roused from her sleep by a dismal cry from the sub-constable. “I can’t stand this—and the state I’m in.”

“Sproule,” shouted the sergeant, “I’ll report you to-morrow.”

So he did, and after divers investigations and an immense expenditure of foolscap and envelopes with "On Her Majesty's Service" in the corners, it was one morning announced in all the newspapers, metropolitan and provincial, that Sub-Constable Joseph Sproule was removed from Gurthnaboher to Shannaclough.

The first man to congratulate him was Murty Magrath. "You're all right now," said the sheriff officer, thrusting his fingers down his white cravat. "You're now in the midst of as gentlemanly a breed of pigs as is to be found in Ireland. You'll find the change very pleasant, I can assure you."

But the pleasant change did not come till later in the autumn: hence we had to put Joe Sproule among the exceptions when recording the fact that the summer months had passed pleasantly for nearly all our friends and acquaintances in the parish of Shannaclough.

Nellie and Nannie were as happy as the day is long all through those summer months, never being a day absent from school, till that "terrible fall of rain"—as their father called it—in the second week of August, compelled them to remain away for nearly a whole week. The roads during that week were flooded for several hundred yards, and several feet deep at three different places between the ivied farm-house and the little convent among the hills. So you see, Nannie and Nellie could not go to school during that week, unless they constructed a canoe, and knew how to paddle it; as the two horses, and Jessie the jennet, and even Robin, the old white donkey, were kept hard at work the whole time hurrying away with the hay from the long meadow. For the river continued to rise and rise after that "terrible fall of rain" till fully half the long meadow and a wide strip of Mr. Cormack's lawn were under water, and Martin Dwyer expected to see his train-cocks set sail down the river in pursuit of divers trusses, which during the first day of the flood, passed under the arches of Corriglia Bridge from meadows higher up the stream. But the train-cocks were saved, "every one of them,"

as Martin Dwyer triumphantly told Rody Flynn and a few other inquiring friends in the chapel-yard after Mass on Lady Day.

Ned Cormack did not fail to note the energy and tact displayed by young Tom Dwyer in getting the hay beyond the reach of danger. Tom was ably seconded by Joe Cooney, and their example roused Mick Cormack and Paddy Brien to a degree of exertion of which they never believed themselves capable, while Cauth Manogue, as her master said, was "as good as the best of them" that day. In fact, the removal of the hay-crop of the long meadow on this occasion was quite an exciting business.

Alice Cormack watched the progress of the work with great interest; and when the last load moved away, she and her mother walked over to the old farmhouse to congratulate Mrs. Dwyer and get some of Terry Hanrahan's eve-apples. Of course, Nannie and Nellie went with them into the orchard, where, somewhat to Mrs. Cormack's surprise, they found the orchardman's daughter sitting on the grass reading a book, with the tears rolling down her sunburnt cheeks. She was a subscriber to the "Sisters' Library," and paid her penny a week punctually. She had finished making a bib for her little sister an hour before, and had just come to the most affecting part of the story which Sister Xavier, who had charge of the library, recommended her to take when paying her penny at the convent on Saturday, when, feeling a touch upon her shoulder, she looked up and started to see the two ladies standing close to her. In spite of the tears on her sunburnt cheeks, there was something comical in Molly Hanrahan's frightened look, and Nannie and Nellie's musical laugh hushed the thrush on the top of the winter pear tree into sudden silence in the very middle of his evening song. Alice could not help joining in the laugh, and even Mrs. Cormack smiled as she took the book from Molly's passive hand.

"Oh yes, Molly," she remarked gently, while the

girl got upon her feet ; " this is a very affecting story. I don't wonder that it made you cry. Are you fond of reading ? "

" I am, ma'am," Molly replied, wiping away the tears with both sleeves. " I never feel lonesome now. Between sewin' and readin' I don't feel the time passin'."

" This is a nice little bib you have made," said Alice, taking the bib from the grass, and critically examining the workmanship. You sew beautifully, Molly, she continued, seeming to count the stitches all round the hem. " Was it the sisters of Mercy taught you to sew ? "

" It was, miss," the girl answered. " And when the orchards are shook," she added, delightedly, " I can go to school again for six months. I was mindin' the kitchen-garden at Cloonmore since the currants got ripe. An' now I must stay here, off and on, till we have the apples drawn home. But after that father says I can go to school."

" I am told you have a very good voice," said Mrs. Cormack.

" Splendid," said Nannie. " She's the best in the singing-class."

" Well, get me some eve-apples," returned Mrs. Cormack, " and then come over to the seat and let me hear you sing."

Molly Hanrahan knew exactly where to lay her hand upon the ripest apples upon the tree—indeed, she had made the selection in expectation of Mrs. Cormack's visit that evening to the orchard—and the quickness with which she performed her task caused Alice no little surprise.

" Well, now, sit down and sing," said Mrs. Cormack, as she took the little basket from Molly and laid it upon the rustic seat.

Molly Hanrahan blushed and smiled and hung down her head ; but taking courage she fixed her soft brown eyes upon the river below, and sang the " Meeting of the Waters," in a voice of such exquisite sweetness and

with such correctness and feeling, that Alice Cormack was first startled and then spell-bound, and, when the song was concluded, stared in amazement at the orchard-man's daughter for two whole minutes, evidently regarding her as something altogether incomprehensible.

"You certainly have a very sweet voice," said Mrs. Cormack with an amused smile at her daughter's astonishment. "Will you sing another song for us?"

"She has every song you could mention," said Nellie. "But when I saw the sun shining on the water I knew that was the one she was going to sing. I wonder is the Vale of Ovoca anything like this."

"I'm sure it is not half so nice," returned Nannie. "I could not rest in the Vale of Ovoca. I couldn't live anywhere else but here. But I suppose Moore meant that whatever place you'd like best would be a vale of Ovoca."

"You are very fond of your home, Nannie," said Mrs. Cormack, pushing back the golden hair from Nannie's forehead with her closed hand, and looking somewhat sadly into the mild blue eyes that lost all their melancholy in responding to the glance that dwelt so kindly upon them. "Your heart will have taken deep root in your 'Vale of Ovoca,' too, Nannie, and yet I dearly love the Vale in which I have found a very happy home." And Mrs. Cormack looked down at her pretty home, with the thick fir grove behind and the neatly-kept lawn in the front, as she added, as if to herself, "Indeed, I doubt that the people who do not care for the spot where they were born and spent their childhood are capable of caring much for any place or any person either."

Nellie's bright dark eyes expressed surprise, and indeed incomprehension, as she fixed them upon Mrs. Cormack's face—the while automatically gathering her coal-black hair behind her ears, in the same way as the gloved hands had done her sister's fair tresses. But Alice seemed to understand the matter very well, and turning round quickly, fixed a lingering look on the house with the

glass porch—observing as she did so that her father and little Eddy were starting on their customary walk to look at the sheep. Then Margaret appeared outside the door with her red cloak on her arm. She must walk by the fir-grove this evening, as the river has overflowed the walk by the hazels. But, to Alice's surprise, instead of going round to the fir-grove, Margaret returns quickly to the house, and disappears within the glass porch. Alice looked round to see if she could discover an explanation of this sudden retreat. It could not be Martin Dwyer with his coat on his arm, and a rake on his shoulder, even though his shadow seemed to reach all the way to the bridge from where he stood on the site of the last train-cock. Nor could Margaret have run away from the white greyhound, standing on the brink of the water, and showing not the slightest symptom of having gone mad. Tom Dwyer is too far away, up among that thick cluster of hay-cocks near the road to have had anything to do with that sudden change of purpose on the part of the beauty of Rockview House. But stay! there is somebody coming. The avenue-gate is swung open; and Alice saw Mr. Robert O'Keeffe riding at an easy trot towards the house.

Mrs. Cormack caught sight of Mr. O'Keeffe as he gracefully reined in his handsome bay horse, and said hurriedly, "Come, Alice, we must be off. Dear me, how near the house is, and yet how long the way seems round to the bridge."

Alice was surprised at her mother's haste; but it was not the first time that she noticed Mrs. Cormack's anxiety to be in the house whenever Mr. O'Keeffe called. Nannie and Nellie were a little surprised too. They hardly ever knew Mrs. Cormack to leave without saying good-bye before. And Tom's dark eyes would have betrayed his disappointment to the most unobservant beholder when he saw Alice and her mother walking quickly towards home, for he intended to accompany them at least as far as the avenue gate.

But we regret to be obliged to record that the feeling was in no way shared by Alice.

Molly Hanrahan also looked cast down for a moment on finding herself alone ; but just then Terry Hanrahan was seen leading his mule through the orchard gate, and Molly jumped up to gather the necessary supply of apples, while yet there was light, for the "Pattern." The "Pattern" was held every year on "Lady Day in harvest," in the little church-yard where Aileen Cormack was laid to rest long ago.

Mr. Armstrong will buy some apples at the "Pattern" to-morrow from Terry Hanrahan, as he has done every Lady Day for five-and-twenty years. Then he'll stroll among the graves, remarking to himself that the dressed graves are not nearly so numerous as they used to be. And stopping for a moment opposite a certain head-stone, Ambrose Armstrong will read the inscription ; and while he reads, a flower will drop as if by accident from his fingers. So it happened every Lady Day in harvest for five and-twenty years.

"I declare I'm almost out of breath," said Alice, laughing, as she opened the door of the porch. "Why were you in such a hurry ?"

"Oh ! I must get tea for Mr. O'Keeffe," returned her mother ; "and I knew your father was out."

There is nothing more than
the ordinary day's work to
do on all the land
that is to be sown

CHAPTER XX.

TOM DWYER GOES TO PAY THE RENT, AND IS PRONOUNCED A GENTLEMANLY YOUNG MAN BY THE LANDLORD'S WIFE—BILL KEERAWAN GIVES GOOD ADVICE TO CON COONEY AS TO THE IMPOLICY OF "MISTERING"—NED CORMACK HEARS SOMETHING IN THE LANDLORD'S OFFICE THAT SETS HIM BROODING—SAMMY SLOANE ADMIRES THE WHITE GREYHOUND, AND REMARKS THAT LIGHT-COLOURED CLOTHES BECOME TOM DWYER.

PERCY PERRINGTON, Esq., J.P., sat in his office, his elbow resting upon a table covered with papers, biting the feathers off his quill pen, with an expression of grinning laughter in his short terrier-like phiz. The only other occupant of the room was Bill Keerawan, the rent-warner, who was standing at the end of the table, wearing quite a solemn, if not sorrowful, cast of countenance. Yet a close observer could have detected something approaching to a twinkle in Bill Keerawan's dull grey eyes, and an occasional twitch of the muscles of the stolid face, indicative of inward gratification, which, in spite of his utmost efforts, he could not wholly conceal. The snappish biting at the quill pen had been kept up for ten minutes or a quarter of an hour. During that space of time the rain had poured down in such a heavy and continuous torrent, that a number of men—some twenty or thirty—who had been standing in twos and threes upon the avenue, had collected under a tree in the lawn, apparently for the sake of the scant shelter of its leafless boughs. Four or five of those men were comfortably and respectably dressed. Eight or

ten wore riding coats that had a flimsy, thread-bare appearance, as, blown by the keen December wind, they seemed to cling to the wearer's legs—which legs in most cases, judging from what was visible of the grey worsted stockings—were not of the stoutest. But the majority of those composing the little crowd under the leafless trees, were of the poorest class of peasant farmers, and—as the rain ran down their slouched hats over their patched and tattered habiliments—looked the very picture of wretchedness. You could easily have picked out the man in that motley group who had the half-year's rent in his pocket. He stood erect, and glanced occasionally towards the house with an assumed smile. The furtive, uneasy, but not *quite* terrified glance at the office window, told of the necessity of asking a little time to make up a deficiency of a few pounds, caused by the low prices of oats of this winter; while an occasional compression of the blanched lips and a catching of the breath betrayed the terror of him who feared the dreaded sentence of eviction would be pronounced that dismal day, and that, wet and hungry, he'd have to return to his cheerless home to tell his wife and little ones that the poor-house must be their doom. The few comfortable, well-dressed farmers buttoned up their overcoats, and with flushed faces, expected every moment to be summoned to their landlord's presence. They keenly felt the indignity of being thus left standing to be drenched to the skin outside their master's door; and at that moment, at least, the thoughts that passed through the minds of these respectable and peace-loving subjects of Queen Victoria were tinctured with a trifle of "sedition." The poorer men took it more quietly, and wrapped their well-worn riding coats closely about them, as the rain became sleety, and the keen blast seemed to pierce to the marrow of their bones. There were some ghastly attempts at joking, always on the part of the raggedest and hungriest-looking of the lot—which tended rather to intensify than relieve the dismalness of the future which afforded

such intense delight to Mr. Percy Perrington, as he sat with his elbow upon the table, biting the feathers off his pen and waiting for the rain to cease before beginning to summon his tenants one by one to his presence.

When the rain began to come down in right earnest, a few of the scattered groups in the lawn moved slowly towards the yard, and had taken shelter in a cow-house, the gate of which stood invitingly open, where they were joined by Bill Keerawan, who, in a friendly and confidential way, told them to go to the front of the house, and "wait there till they'd be called. He likes to see all the tenants together," Bill Keerawan added solemnly; "an' if ye warn't all there there's no knowing how long he might delay before beginnin' to send out for ye."

The tenants addressed, of course, acted upon the friendly advice, and returned to the lawn.

The rent-warner entered the house by the back door, and made his way to the landlord's office without waiting to be summoned. Bill Keerawan stood inside the door, evidently expecting that business was to commence forthwith. But as Mr. Perrington went on biting the pen, and minute after minute passed without a word being spoken, the rent-warner moved softly to the end of the table, for the double purpose of getting near the fire that blazed invitingly behind the landlord's back, and of taking up a position from which he might be able to discover what it was Mr. Perrington saw out in the lawn that so amused and delighted him. Bill Keerawan did not at once catch the humour of the scene outside, and consequently looked a little blank and puzzled.

"It must be somethin' he's thinkin' on," was the rent-warner's reflection, as he looked in vain over the dreary landscape for any object even remotely suggestive of cheerfulness. As a great gust splashed the heavy rain against the window, so as for a moment to shut out all view of objects outside, Bill Keerawan looked placidly at the blazing fire, of whose grateful warmth he was beginning to feel conscious, and thought how pleasantly his position at the moment contrasted with that of the

poor devils under the tree. Then, for the first time the secret of his master's gladness of spirit dawned upon him. He looked demurely through the corners of his eyes at the drenched and shivering crowd outside, and the rent-warner's stolid features indicated a struggle between real and counterfeit sympathy—the one with Mr. Percy Perrington, the other with Mr. Percy Perrington's tenantry. The sky brightened a little, however, and the rain became less heavy. Mr. Perrington looked at his pen, which was quite bare of feathers by this time, and was about turning to the rent-warner, when something outside the window caught his eye, and, starting to his feet, he exclaimed—

“Didn't I tell that fellow never to let me see a sight of that dog or I'd shoot him on the spot?”

“He gave him away to Mr. Armstrong,” returned Bill Keerawan. “I never saw the dog with him this six months. But the devil wouldn't keep him from the rabbit-burrow.”

“And the fellow refused to give the dog to me,” said Mr. Perrington with a scowl.

“Sure he hasn't a stim av sense,” rejoined Bill Keerawan—remembering that his mistress was very friendly to poor Ponsonby, and fancying he heard Mrs. Perrington's step approaching the office door. “Bob Dee, the fool, 'ud buy an' sell Ponsonby at a fair.”

“Really,” exclaimed the lady of the house, as she opened the door of the office and walked in quickly, but with a certain air of dignity and grace that took away all appearance of haste from her movements, “it is a shame to see so respectable a young man as that standing out there in the rain.”

Mr. Perrington looked through the window, an' for the first time saw that young Tom Dwyer was among the crowd under the trees, which was less closely huddled together, and began to show symptoms of breaking up again into twos and threes as the day cleared up. Tom Dwyer was dressed in a suit of light brownish grey tweed, and looked provokingly dry and warm and fresh, as he

stood erect with his shoulders thrown back and his hands in his coat pockets in an attitude that showed his well-knit figure to the best advantage. There was silence for some moments ; but Mrs. Perrington laid her white small hand on the corner of the table, and seemed determined to have her way. It could scarcely be said of Mrs. Perrington that she was "no longer young." It certainly could not be denied that she was still a handsome woman, and every inch a lady.

"Go and tell Mr. Dwyer to come in," she said quietly turning to the rent-warner, who, without the least symptom of hesitation, obeyed the order at once. A minute after, Tom Dwyer was doffing his low round hat as he entered the office, bowing in some surprise to a slight, but evidently kindly-meant inclination of the head from the landlord's wife, who had the name among the tenantry of being proud, if not haughty and scornful.

Tom Dwyer waited for some time expecting to be addressed by the landlord ; but that gentleman only leant back in his chair and stared at the young farmer's face, now a little flushed by embarrassment, and uncertainty as to what he ought to do.

"My father," said Tom Dwyer at last, "caught a bad cold at the fair on Wednesday, and is confined to his bed."

The landlord seemed to laugh, keeping his eyes fixed on the young man's face—but made no reply.

"I have the rent," went on Tom Dwyer, a little hurriedly, thrusting his hand into an inside breast-pocket, and drawing out a bundle of notes. For a moment Tom Dwyer thought he had done something very ridiculous, if not unmannerly, in speaking of his father's illness in such a presence ; and opening the bundle of notes he laid them hastily upon the table. But Mr. Perrington only stared and grinned.

Mrs. Perrington seemed determined to remain in the office—which surprised Bill Keerawan who had never known her to do so before.

She took a paper in her hand, pretending to read it,

but keeping her eyes fixed upon her husband's face with a look of mingled reproach and contempt.

"There is the rent," said Tom Dwyer, laying his hand upon the bank-notes and drawing them a little nearer to the landlord, who, however, took no notice of them.

Tom Dwyer now became quite calm, allowing the hand with which he had moved the notes to remain resting upon the table, while the other in which he held his low round hat, dropped easily by his side.

There was a mixture of amusement and admiration in the glances with which Mrs. Perrington contemplated the repose of Tom Dwyer's face and figure in which even her keen and experienced eye could scarcely detect the least appearance of acting.

"I thought," she remarked, "that you were out under that awfully heavy rain; but I'm glad to see I was mistaken."

"I went into the lodge, ma'am," he replied, taking his hand from the table, "and remained there till it was nearly over."

Mr. Perrington snatched up the notes, and having counted them hurriedly, filled a printed form of receipt, and pushed it across the table. Tom Dwyer took up the receipt and withdrew.

"He's a very gentlemanly young man," said Mrs. Perrington, laying down the paper she had pretended to read. "One would think he was accustomed to the best society."

Bill Keerawan's mouth opened, with as near an approach to an expression of surprise as his stolid countenance was capable of assuming.

"Call in Con Cooney," said Mr. Perrington in a rasping voice, as his wife retired biting her lip, as if to prevent Bill Keerawan from observing the smile that flashed over her handsome, though somewhat worn face. The lady had her grievances as a married woman, which she felt keenly enough, but which her pride made her pretend altogether to ignore. It was not with any intention of

retaliating that she went into the office to protest against young Tom Dwyer being left out in the rain, but she could not help a feeling of mischievous gratification at her husband's annoyance, and its evident cause. Mrs. Perrington had been sitting in her parlour alone and lonely, listening to the wind as it whistled through the trees, and occasionally glancing towards the window, when an erratic blast flung the rain against them as if a fire-engine was playing upon the house. She knew the tenants were exposed to the pelting of that pitiless storm. But Mr. Perrington would as soon have thought of commiserating so many rough-coated, long-horned Irish cows, huddled under that old tree in the lawn, as that little crowd of Irish tenant-farmers. They were made to endure wind and rain without wincing. But when the miniature hurricane had spent its fury, and Mrs. Perrington, glancing listlessly through her parlour window, observed a well-built, good-looking, and—as she said to herself—"genteel" young man among the stirring crowd, dressed too, in what seemed to be a suit of "summer cloth," she was struck by the aptness of the circumstance, and went at once to call her husband's attention to it. The result was altogether satisfactory to her; but whether she rendered a real service to young Tom Dwyer, is quite another question.

Bill Keerawan appeared bare-headed outside the hall-door, a sign that the day's proceedings were about to commence in the regular way, and according to long established usage. The rent-warner, looking gravely sorrowful, as if some solemn religious ceremony in connection with a funeral was proceeding inside, beckoned to Con Cooney, who immediately walked towards the hall-door. Con had an old lease, two of the lives in which (Martin Dwyer and Ned Cormack) were still in existence, and was consequently, in a sense, independent. Had many others got such leases—as Ambrose Armstrong's father, while in charge of the property, recommended, several hundred acres of the heathery mountain side would be yielding fair crops of potatoes and oats

like Con Cooney's little farm—to which, we may tell the reader, Julia Flynn's violet eyes were very often turned with a wistful lingering gaze, while she milked the little brown cow, morning and evening, during the summer and autumn months. Even this very day of which we write, and while that brief but fierce rain storm was sweeping round the breast of the mountain, Julia peeped through the leaves of the geranium in her bedroom window, and wondered whether the hailstones beat with greater violence against Mave Cooney's window—in which she knew there was a geranium also—than against her own. Julia did not know that Con was just there at Woodcourt to pay the rent. But her father knew it; for it was only the night before he lent poor Andy Cody twenty-seven shillings to make up the half-year's rent. Davy Lacy was also aware of the fact that Mr. Percy Perrington's tenants were paying their rent that day. The shoemaker, who was a reader of the human countenance, solemnly assured Rody Flynn that he could tell to an hour how near the gale-day was by looking in a farmer's face. Con Cooney stopped before he reached the hall door, as Mr. Cormack rode up at the moment, and dismounting from his black cob stamped his feet several times upon the gravel.

"By gad, Con," said Ned Cormack, "'tis a very cold day. But I saw that shower coming on from the Windgap hills, and turned back till it was over."

"Myself and Tom Dwyer ran into the lodge from it," returned Con Cooney. "I tould him to wait for me there, as I partly guessed I'd be one of the first that'd be called in."

"I saw the white greyhound at the door, and thought it was like his," Mr. Cormack remarked, handing the rein to Bill Keerawan.

"We never knew he was after us," returned Con, "till we wur as far as the forge; and we couldn't get him to go back then."

"The master hates the sight of that dog," said Bill Keerawan, in his seriously sorrowful way. "He axed

him from Ponsonby, an' he refused him. He was going to shoot him several times. I thought it was very foolish of young Tom to bring him here."

While Ned Cormack was closeted with the landlord, Bill Keerawan laid his hand on Con Cooney's shoulder.

"Con," said the rent-warner, "mind what I say to you. If there's any talk about Tom Dwyer, for your life take care and don't 'Mister' him."

"Why so?" Con Cooney asked, looking rather puzzled.

"Nothin'" returned Bill Keerawan, with awful solemnity. "Nothin' sets the masther wild like Mistherin' a tenant. Unless a landlord happens to be a lord or a sir, he can't stand Mistherin' a tenant, for you could say nothin' greater than Misther to himself. I'm afeard the misthress is after doin' harm by Mistherin' young Tom. He doesn't like either, to see her takin' notice av likely young fellows. But she does it on purpose to vex him. She knows things," Bill went on, lowering his voice, "that she don't pretend to. An' faith I think she's frightenin' him. You don't see him serenadin' up there as of'en as he used," and the rent-warner nodded towards the mountain.

"Up where?" Con Cooney asked with suppressed fierceness, while his face flushed crimson.

"You know what I mane," returned the rent-warner, nodding in a particular direction—which was not towards Con Cooney's house.

"Oh, I know," said Con Cooney with an impatient jerk of the head. "Here is Mr. Cormack; so I'd better go in and pay the rent." He could not help noticing that Ned Cormack passed him in silence, with his eyes fixed on the ground. It was plain that something unusual had taken place between Mr. Percy Perrington and his wealthiest tenant that day.

"You're waiting for Con Cooney, Tom," Mr. Cormack remarked, on seeing Tom Dwyer standing at the door of the lodge. He was going in as I was coming out; so he'll be with you immediately. "But, Tom," he added,

after reflecting for a minute, "will you call in when you are passing? I wish to have a little conversation with you."

"Very well, sir; I'll call in," Tom answered, feeling uneasy and even alarmed. There was certainly something strange in Mr. Cormack's manner. He seemed to have a struggle with himself before he could ask Tom Dwyer to call in on his way home. And as he rode slowly towards the mountain, the face of this worldly-minded, but upright man was agitated by contending emotions. He cherished a deep feeling of admiration and gratitude for his first love, Ellen Dwyer. She was his good angel. He had to thank her for bringing about his marriage with—he verily believed—a "perfect woman." His daughter—he was beginning to feel very proud of Alice—was at that moment completing her education under the affectionate care of Ellen Dwyer. For poor, honest, simple-hearted Martin, too, he entertained a feeling of real regard. While he had come to look upon Tom's society as a sort of necessary matter of course, he scarcely gave a thought to Nannie and Nellie, and did not think at all of their mother. He'd miss old Martin a good deal. But the thought of seeing Tom no more was absolutely painful. A tear did really glisten in Ned Cormack's grey eye as he looked at that old ivy-clad farm-house, though, unlike Ambrose Armstrong, no thought of the twin sisters crossed his mind. But his heart swelled with a great joy as in imagination he joined all that land enclosed by the high wall of loose brown boulder stones to his own broad acres.

"There wouldn't be such another farm in the three counties," thought Ned Cormack, as he reined in his black cob, at a point of the road from which his eye could take in the whole of the two farms, except the portion of his own hidden by the fir grove. Then he thought of his little son, and murmured audibly the words, "my little boy!" in tones that came up from the bottom of his heart; and poor Martin Dwyer and

his son were forgotten. Yet when Tom called an hour later, Ned Cormack did warn him to be careful and do nothing that might offend the landlord; and advised him to tell his father to be on his guard, as he had reason to believe that Mr. Percy Perrington would be only too glad of a pretext to fall out with him.

On their way from Woodcourt, Tom Dwyer and Con Cooney passed Sammy Sloane on the road. The little bailiff stretched his stout legs, and cocked up the toes of his laced boots to keep up with them.

"That's a very pretty white greyhound," Sammy Sloane remarked, by way of opening a conversation.

"Who is this coming down the hill?" said Tom Dwyer, not heeding the bailiff's commendation of Rover's beauty, and not observing that Con Cooney had lagged behind a little, as if he had no particular fancy for Mr. Sloane's company.

"I really can't recognise him," returned the bailiff, nearly closing his eyelids to assist his short-sightedness.

"Do you know who he is?" Tom asked again, turning round to Con Cooney.

"Devil a know I know," Con replied with a puzzled look. "But 'tis plain he knows us."

"I think he's a clergyman," said Sammy Sloane, shading his half-shut eyes with his two hands.

Tom Dwyer laughed aloud, as he recognised in the person approaching, George Ponsonby's foster-brother, Bob Dee.

"I hope your reverence is well," said Con Cooney, as Bob Dee came nearer, with a proud grin on his sooty face.

"The first eye I gev at you I knew you," exclaimed Bob Dee, looking at Tom Dwyer, and evidently delighted with his own visual quickness and mental lucidity. "Faith; an' I did so," he added slowly and assuringly, "be the white coat."

"That was very shrewd of you, Bob," Sammy Sloane remarked, with a cautious wink; "you knew Mr. Dwyer by the light-coloured coat."

"Aye, begor," returned Bob Dee, evidently surprised at his own cleverness. "An' besides" he went on, "I knew Rover."

"If you were poaching, Mr. Dwyer," said the little bailiff, blandly, "you'd be easily recognised by your coat and your dog."

"Ponsonby cried afther Rover," said Bob Dee. "Though he says I'm a fool, 'Bob,' says he, 'you'll never see poor Rover again. Perrington was going to shoot him, an' I gave him to Mr. Amby.' An' then he began to cry," added Bob Dee, looking from one to the other of his listeners, and laughing at Ponsonby's silliness in crying for the loss of his dog. "An' Ponsonby says—Oh, I'm a fool!" he added, as if the notion was the funniest of jokes.

"Who gave you that grand hat and coat, Bob?" Con Cooney asked.

"Father Clancy," Bob replied, looking down at the long skirt of the clerical coat. "'Twas duskish when I went home, an' my mother made a curtchy to me—she thought I was a priest. I promised Father Clancy I wouldn't rob my poor mother any more, an' naither I won't," added the penitent thief, "because she keeps the munny on dher her head every night since I made the last haul, an' the devil couldn't come at it. An' 'tis Ponsonby she sends to buy the wisted for her now, for fear I'd buy tabaccy with the money. Ponsonby is well able to knit a stockin', only he can't turn the heel. My mother," continued Bob Dee, suddenly becoming angry and fretful, "'ud wear the flesh off your bones workin'. She'd make me carry furze an' scraws for the fire, besides houldin' the wisted till I'd have pains in my arms, while she'd be makin' a bottom as big as your two fists."

"That's too bad," said Tom Dwyer. "Why doesn't she make Ponsonby do his share?"

"She doesn't, then," replied Bob Dee, with tears of indignation in his eyes. "He has nothin' to do, but to knit away fair and aisy, while she'd be tellin' him stories

about his mother. Ponsonby's mother was a lady," Bob went on, suddenly seeming to forget his grievances, and resuming his good humour. "An' he has a cousin in the County Clare that's a rich man, an' has as foine a house as the priest. He'll go down to the County Clare when he gets new clothes, an' then he'll be rich, an' I'll never be in the want of a poip an' tabaccy; an' my mother'll get a new silk gownd," added Bob Dee, planting the end of his long stick, or rather pole, upon the road, and pulling his clerical hat over his brows. "Oi go over now to Paddy Ryan's, and they'll give me my belly full of leather-coats."

"That poor woman," said Sammy Sloane, "is living in the loneliest little hovel I ever saw. 'Tis built of sods and scraws, as they call them, and covered with furze. Only for the smoke I'd never know there was a human abode within a mile of me, when one day I sat down to rest as I was crossing over the hill. I was really surprised when I went in and saw the poor woman knitting all alone there. 'Twas like something you'd read in a story-book. Very few people pass that way. She told me her husband was a furze cutter, when I asked her why she lived in that lonely place; and that' she's used to it now, and has nowhere else to live."

"I was never up there," said Tom Dwyer, looking towards Knockgrana-hill. "But I remember hearing Rody Flynn describing the house, the time that Ponsonby and Bob Dee had the fever."

"I went as far as the foot of the hill with Rody a few times," said Con Cooney; "but I was too much afraid of the sickness to go up. He tould me 'twas sense, Ponsonby got, when he was gettin' his increases. Ponsonby is not a right fool at all, for he gets fits of sensibleness, but Bob is a born fool."

"I must go into Mr. Cormack's," said Tom Dwyer, on reaching the gate of Rockview House. "Bring Rover over the bridge with you, and wait at the house for me, if I'm not there before you."

"How could he be up before you?" the little bailiff asked.

"There's a short cut," returned Con Cooney curtly, as he walked on towards Corringlea Bridge.

"He's a fine young fellow," said Sammy Sloane, looking after Tom Dwyer as he walked with his usual springy step and slightly devil-may-care swing up the avenue. "And that light dress becomes him admirably." Mr. Sloane had to undergo a severe cross-examination upon oath in reference to that light coloured dress, as hereafter shall appear.

CHAPTER XXI.

AMBROSE ARMSTRONG AT THE BRIDGE AGAIN—ALICE CORMACK'S WELCOME HOME—WHAT HAPPENED BY THE CLIPPED HEDGE IN RODY FLYNN'S GARDEN, AFTER CON COONEY HAD SOLD HIS FIRKIN OF BUTTER—THE LITTLE FARMHOUSE UP THE MOUNTAIN AND ITS OCCUPANTS—THE INFLUENCE OF A TURF FIRE.

IT is just a year and a day since we first saw Mr. Ambrose Armstrong looking the very picture of a happy old gentleman, after recovering from his amazement at finding himself face to face with Corringlea Bridge. But if he looked the picture of a happy old gentleman that day, how are we to describe him to-day, as he stands with his elbow upon the rustic gate, alternately looking through the middle arch of the bridge at the handsome house with the glass porch, and watching the play of Tom Dwyer's features, who, with his back against the sally tree which serves the purpose of pier to the rustic gate, and poring over a manuscript, with a curious mixture of profound seriousness and laughing delight in his dark eyes.

"Well, Tom, how do you like it?" Mr. Armstrong asked, taking off his hat to let the cool breeze play upon his forehead.

"'Tis really beautiful, sir," Tom replied profoundly; "and what you say is true," he added, suddenly changing from the profound to the pleasant. "They all are glad to have her coming. Nannie and Nellie are nearly out of their senses. And just as you say, every one is praising her."

"It was the children suggested it to me," returned Mr. Armstrong, "when I saw them gathering the

flowers, and heard Nellie say they'd make her Queen of the May."

"But her eyes are not blue, sir," Tom remarked seriously, as he again referred to the manuscript.

"Oh, you can consider that a poetic licence, or change the word if you like," said Mr. Armstrong. "But will you sing it?" he asked, persuasively.

"If I got the whole world I couldn't sing it before company," Tom Dwyer answered, running his eyes over the lines, and shaking his head. "Read it out again, sir," added he; "I'm much like Rody Flynn—I'd find much greater pleasure in listening to you reading poetry than if I read it myself."

Mr. Armstrong put on his silver-rimmed spectacles, and holding the paper at arms length, read the following copy of verses for Tom Dwyer, who listened as if the missing of a single syllable would be a serious matter indeed:—

OUR MAY QUEEN.

She's coming, she's coming! I hear them all humming
 Their gladness, her praises, wherever I roam;
 The small birds are singing, the wild flowers are springing,
 They're springing, singing to welcome her home.
 I'm longing to meet her, I'm sighing to greet her,
 Ah, my heart was all cold when my love was away;
 But now it is burning, to think she's returning,
 With the sunshine of summer and smiles of the May.

She's coming, she's coming! my fancy is roaming,
 To cull fairest flowers to strew at her feet;
 But oh, had I pinions to sweep the dominions
 Of poesy, nothing so bright could I meet,
 As the loveliness beaming, and ceaselessly streaming,
 From my darling's blue eyes, round her smile's sunny
 play.
 And that smile will soon cheer us, those eyes will be
 near us,
 'Mid the flowers, and the bowers, and the blossoms of
 May.

She's coming, she's coming! I hear them all summing,
Her graces, her virtues, wherever I roam;
Bright garlands are wreathing, bright music is breathing,
The valley seems smiling to welcome her home.
I'm dreaming about thee, 'tis winter without thee,
Awaiting thy presence their sports they delay.
Now long I've bemoaned thee! come, come, we'll
enthrone thee,
The Queen of our hearts, and the Queen of the May.

"She'll be delighted, sir," said Tom. "She was never tired reading your poetry in the old scrap-book."

"'Tis very strange," said Mr. Armstrong, "that I never made a single rhyme since the time of that old scrap-book, until now, though I often tried. In fact it is quite extraordinary," he added, looking over the lines as if to convince himself that they really did rhyme.

"I think I hear the car," said Tom Dwyer, drawing his breath hard, and looking as if he were frightened.

Mr. Armstrong listened with a beaming face as the sound of wheels came nearer and nearer. The car turned from the road skirting the mountain, and in a minute or two was slowly passing over Corriglia Bridge.

Yes; it was Alice—her head bent over the flowers which Nellie and Nannie had been waiting for hours at the corner of the orchard to present her with. She might have passed without looking towards the rustic gate, had not her father, who sat on the other side of the car, turned his head round saying,—

"There is Mr. Armstrong at the gate, and Tom Dwyer with him. They are taking off their hats to you, Alice," he continued, seeing that she kept her eyes still bent on the flowers. Then Alice looked up with a very deep blush and bowed laughingly to her two friends. Nannie and Nellie had told her how Mr. Armstrong had written the "loveliest" poetry

they had ever read to welcome her home, which may account for the very deep blush that suffused Alice's face while she bowed to Mr. Armstrong and Tom Dwyer.

There was not even a solitary trout in the fishing basket that evening. Yet the angler took it up from the bank, where it had been lying for several hours, and flung it over his shoulder, looking so supremely happy, that Con Cooney remarked to his sister Mave, as they passed over the bridge in the jennet's cart on their way home from the butter market, that Mr. Armstrong "must be after doing great work on the river to-day."

"Aye, faith," added Con Cooney, as he looked down at the old angler, "'tis younger an' livelier he's gettin' every day. 'Tis this day twelve-month I was so surprised to see him down the river, an' he goin' on crutches so long before. I must get a couple of hares an' make him come up for a run. He's promisin' to come up this while back, but he thinks he's not strong enough for the mountain. But he's a new man altogether."

Con himself looked a very different man from what he did when you saw him with his arm in a sling, twelve months since. The wounded hand healed so quickly that at each successive dressing Rody Flynn used to utter an exclamation of wonder and delight, and call in Julia to witness the miracle. Con's mother often remarked since to her daughter, that it was the lucky hand to him, he had become so sensible and saving. Active and hard-working Con Cooney always was, but as his mother said "it all went in spendin'." He suffered so much, however, from real want, in consequence of not being able to work during the spring, and felt so humiliated when Larry Foley and some others of his creditors began to dun him, that poor Con Cooney, with the tears in his eyes "gave his hand and word" to Rody Flynn, that he'd follow his advice and give up spendin'."

How Jim Foley strutted and swaggered, as he told Con Cooney, in presence of Julia Flynn, who fixed her violet eyes, half-frightened, half-pityingly on Con's flushed face, that "really he (Jim Foley) could wait no longer for that money," adding insolently that if it was not paid forthwith, Con might "expect a visit from Sammy Sloane, with Barrister Howley's compliments." It was then Con Cooney felt the full force of Rody Flynn's reasoning; and then that he followed the little cooper into his room. Con solemnly pledged himself to give up "spending," and try in future to be always prepared for the rainy day. To-day Con Cooney put up his jennet in Rody Flynn's yard, after selling his firkin of butter, the first filled by him, or rather by his handsome sister Mave, this season; and Julia happening to be in the garden, he walked out to her just to look at the onions and early potatoes. Well, they had a little talk standing by the clipped hedge, the purport of which may be guessed from the fact that Julia, on returning to the house, went into her room, closing the door behind her, and after giving one look through the foliage of scarlet geraniums at the little house high up upon the mountain side, covered her face with her hands and burst into tears, such tears as spring from the human heart only once or so in a lifetime. Before she could dry her eyes, the door was pushed open by Mave Cooney, whose gentle and beautiful face expressed surprise and concern; for only half an hour before Julia's eyes were "running over with laughter," while telling an amusing story about Sub-Constable Sproule, who at the moment stood outside the workshop door holding his baton with both hands against the jamb and leaning his chest upon it.

"Oh, Julia!" exclaimed gentle Mave Cooney, in her soft voice, "is there anything after happening?"

"Well, there is, Mave," Julia replied, blushing; "and I'll tell you, for I know you won't be sorry to hear it. And I hope your mother won't be sorry," continued Julia, looking pleadingly into Mave's wondering blue

eyes, while the tears came again into her own. "Do you think will she, Mave?"

"Oh Julia, what is it?" Mave asked. "What can it be at all?"

"I hardly have the courage to tell you," Julia replied, hesitatingly.

"For goodness sake, Julia, tell me, an' don't keep me this way," pleaded Mave; "I don't know what to think, only I'm frightened."

"Well, Mave—Con—is—after—asking me," stammered Julia, her face flushing again as she bent her head and nervously plucked a shrivelled leaf from the scarlet geranium.

"Is that it?" exclaimed Mave Cooney, with a little start. "Oh, Julia! I can't tell you how glad I am," and Mave clasped her hands together and turned her mild eyes upwards with a look of fervent thankfulness that made the more impulsive Julia fling her arms round Mave Cooney's neck, and imprint a hearty kiss upon her cheek.

Then Mave took Charlie's photograph from the bookshelf and commenced studying it, though, indeed, unless gentle Mave Cooney was very dull, she must have had that picture well by heart, she had looked at it so often and so long.

"Isn't it funny to see that beard on him?" Julia asked.

"Yes," returned Mave, pensively; "but I can see his mouth and his chin through it the same as always."

"His mouth and his chin through that fleece!" exclaimed Julia in astonishment.

"Yes," Mave replied, seriously; "and the laugh in his eye through the frown—the same as always."

"Do you remember him so well?" Julia asked, a new thought striking her, that made the violet eyes absolutely flash through their long silky lashes. "And my father is so fond of her," thought Julia, the violet eyes assuming a softer lustre, as she waited a reply to her question.

"Of course I remember him," was the reply, "why wouldn't I?"

"He said in his last letter," returned Julia, "that he'd come home this year for certain."

"I wish he would," said Mave, "an' come up the mountain every Sunday, the same as always."

"God grant it!" exclaimed Julia in a low, earnest tone. "If that comes to pass," she went on dreamily, "I'd have nothing else to wish for in this world."

"I think my mother will be as glad as myself," said Mave, rousing herself from poring over Charles Flynn's photograph. "She says the sore hand was a lucky hand to Con, he got so sensible." Maybe Julia it was a luckier hand to him than she thinks. Maybe what's afther happenin' wouldn't happen at all, only for him comin' in so often to your father."

"I don't know about that," Julia replied. "But I never knew how fond I was of him till I saw him so pale and then so sorrowful, the day my father said he should go into the hospital."

"Here comes Joe, with a grand bunch of lilac," said Mave, raising the corner of the white curtain. "Will I call him in and tell him?"

"Oh, no, Mave," returned Julia with a touch of sadness in her voice. "Don't tell anyone yet awhile. I think Con spoke to my father and to your mother before he said anything to me. But, Mave, don't tell Joe. I'll tell him myself sometime. He's sure," she added, laughingly, "that I'm thinking of that poor vain fool Jim Foley. An' I'm afraid he'll get up a fight sometime with that policeman that Murty Magrath is so fond of humbuggin'. Ah! Joe has a great heart," she added with a sigh. "He has a spirit like Charlie." There was a look of sadness, almost of pain, in Julia Flynn's eyes as she said this. Was it because she felt that the man she loved was not all she would have him to be? However that may have been, Con Cooney himself has no misgivings whatever as to his own merits, as he passes over Corringlea Bridge,

stepping out quickly to overtake the jennet, who had taken it into her head to break into an unexpected and altogether unnecessary trot, as if she feared the bridge might break down with the weight of her load, which happened to consist of gentle Mave Cooney and an empty butter firkin fresh from Rody Flynn's hands. Well, if the bridge did break down it could not have been with the weight of grief on Mave Cooney's heart, at that moment at all events.

Now, if Mr. Ambrose Armstrong, who was wiping his spectacles with his pocket handkerchief preparatory to putting them back into their shagreen case, happened to raise his eyes to the bridge and caught a glimpse of Mave Cooney's happy face, no doubt he'd have run away with the notion that Miss Alice Cormack's coming home had something to do with it, which would have been quite a mistaken notion—a mere flight of fancy on the part of Mr. Ambrose Armstrong.

"We'll just run in and shake hands with Alice, Tom," said Mr. Ambrose Armstrong, feeling his cravat to ascertain that it was properly adjusted.

"Do, sir," returned Tom, who felt an unaccountable anxiety to put off his meeting with Alice. "There's Con Cooney after passing the bridge," he added hurriedly, "and I want to speak to him."

"Well, give me my May Queen," said Mr. Armstrong, holding out his white slender hand for the copy of verses which Tom had inadvertently put into his pocket.

"By George, sir," said Tom, as he handed them back, "you ought to make a song about Mave Cooney. She's the handsomest girl in the three parishes." And Tom, without waiting for a reply, sprang over the rustic gate, and crossed the long meadow, to intercept Con Cooney before the lively jennet had passed the gate opposite the orchard, leaving the old angler alone, with his arm thrown over the rustic gate, and looking dreamingly through the arch of the bridge.

"Yes," he said to himself, "Mave is certainly a singularly beautiful girl. I noticed that before."

"Yet," he went on with a smile and a shake of the head, "I didn't think I could write poetry about her—the muse had so completely deserted me. It is really very strange how these rhymes came into my head," said Mr. Armstrong, just glancing at the verses Tom had handed him, and then looking again through the middle arch of the bridge. Alice had just leaped off the car, and was stooping down to kiss little Eddy, who had run out to meet her, as soon as he saw the car. But Eddy always ran out when he saw his father coming. Margaret's graceful figure was also seen gliding from the glass porch, at the door of which their mother remained standing to welcome her favourite daughter home. It is a delightful picture, Mr. Armstrong thinks. Yet, as he contemplates it, leaning against the rustic gate, he gets glimpses of the low thatched house, and the straight narrow boreen, and of that fair young face that used to light up with gladness to see him; but these glimpses are fleeting and shadowy, and do not wholly obliterate the handsome modern house and winding avenue, as happened just a year ago, when you first made the acquaintance of Ambrose Armstrong at the bridge of Corriglea.

Notwithstanding his hurry, Tom Dwyer had nothing very particular to say to Con Cooney when he came out upon the road at the opposite angle from the hedge of the long meadow. In fact Tom only wanted an excuse for declining to accompany Mr. Armstrong to Rockview House that evening. Somehow he required a little time to prepare his mind for meeting Miss Cormack; and, besides, he'd prefer that his first meeting with her should be more or less casual and accidental. So Tom Dwyer walked leisurely after the jennet's cart with Con Cooney—trying, as well as he could, to avoid looking into Mave's sweet face, as she showed evident symptoms of not being quite at her ease when their eyes happened to meet. Mave was not accustomed to being stared at up there upon the lonely mountain, and was as shy and timid as a young fawn. But even

Tom himself felt the awkwardness of the situation ; for it is awkward for two young people who are not quite strangers to each other, and yet not very intimate, and having nothing on earth to talk about, to be thus compelled to stare at each other's faces for a very considerable length of time. Walk for a few score perches after a jennet's cart, or even after that curious vehicle called a "croydon," with a face like Mave Cooney's compelling your eyes to look straight before them, and you will find that it is so. At least, we often found it so, and yet felt sorry when cart or "croydon" moved quickly away, relieving us from our embarrassment, but leaving with us a vague regret, and a sense of loss for all that. The road up to the mountain was rough as well as steep and narrow, and Mave jumped out of the jennet's cart on coming to it ; and she was tripping lightly through the short heather before Tom Dwyer remembered his want of gallantry in allowing her to alight without offering to assist her. In fact, Mave had purposely taken advantage of a moment while Tom's eyes happened to be turned towards the house with the glass porch, on the other side of the river.

Old Mrs. Cooney, who was hale and active, and not very old either, was milking the cows when her son and daughter reached the end of the rough, narrow road, which was enclosed by walls of boulder stones for a couple of hundred yards through the reclaimed portion of Con Cooney's holding.

"Oh ! you have 'em all milked," said Mave, looking at the slackened udders of the fine hardy little cows. She had hurried back from the house, having thrown off her cloak, and looked quite disappointed, as she let the skirt of her dress, which she was in the act of pulling up, fall down again.

"Go in," said her mother, "and put up that stockin' for me. I counted the loops wrong three times, my eyes are gettin' so wake. But id wasn't the eyes entirely," continued Mrs. Cooney to herself, "but thim calves runnin' in my head, for fear'd they might go

over to the bog-heles an' be dhrownded before Con 'ud be home. "Con," she called out, "go at wanst an' turn in the calves. I don't know at all what fancy they have for goin' down to that wet place."

"'Tis because 'tis the best place for 'em this time o' year," returned Con, as he unharnessed the jennet.

"Yes; but they're not ould enough to have sinse yet," rejoined his mother; "an' they might fall into wan uv thim holes."

"Well, just wait till the jennet takes a tumble, an' I'll dhrive 'em in," said Con, as he went into the little stable to hang up the jennet's "tackling."

When Con Cooney, having placed the calves out of danger, and taken a look at the other stock in his little mountain farm, returned to the house, he found his mother in her usual place in the chimney corner, knitting away at the stocking which Mave had "put up" for her, while Mave sat on a stool in front of the flickering turf fire in her best gown, and with a silk tie of a pink and white "check pattern" round her swan-like neck; her hands, which, unlike her neck, were rather brown, and a little roughened from work, both indoor and outdoor, clasped and resting upon her knees, looking as if she thought herself a fine lady, who had nothing on earth to do but watch the flickering glare of the turf fire, and build castles in the air.

Con placed a straw-bottom chair on the well-swept hearth, and sat down in the corner opposite his mother.

It was pleasant to look at the bright turf fire, and even to feel its warmth, for though it was May the breeze was chill that evening upon the mountain. But is there an evening in the whole year when it would not be pleasant to sit before a turf fire in an Irish farmhouse? Try it on the 21st of June, at the hour "when daylight dies." You wipe the perspiration from your face, and look about for the coolest corner to sit down and gasp in. But some mysterious influence draws you towards the hearth. You drop into the straw-bottom chair, which raises itself on its hind legs, and

you begin to rock backwards and forwards. Feeling soothed by the gentle motion, you cast your eyes around for the dresser, the big table, the pails on the stillion, the door high up in the gable—which reason tells you can only be reached by means of a ladder—the black, shining rafters, at which you stare till, feeling a little dizzy, you let the forelegs of the straw-bottom chair drop suddenly down, as if you thought you were on the point of falling backward upon your poll. Then you look into the flickering blaze of the turf fire, and wonder how it is that though you distinctly feel its glow you are nevertheless becoming cool and comfortable. Mysterious currents of air are playing about your temples, as if the fairies were fanning you. You forget the smothering dust and scorching sun of that 21st day of June. But if you have the misfortune to be addicted to the “soothing weed,” and, lighting your pipe with a coal from that turf fire, take to watching the smoke as it gracefully curls up the wide chimney; and if a cricket should strike up somewhere behind the pot-hangers in the corner where a supplementary fire, generally of rushes, is lit on the occasion; and if there is no one to remind you of the flight of time, then—the cricket having uttered its last chirp before going to sleep, and the last ember of the turf fire having given up the ghost and sunk into grey ashes—you may lift the latch and walk out and take a look at the sun peeping above the eastern horizon, before getting to your bed in the room inside the parlour, for we assume you to be an honoured guest; and as you try to close your eyes you’ll probably ask yourself, what on earth fascination had that turf fire in the farmer’s kitchen that kept you in the straw-bottom chair until this hour of the morning? There are, however, conditions even more favourable to the influences of a turf fire than solitude and the cricket behind the pot-hangers, involving mirth and fun, wreathed smiles and ringing laughter, haply softened and subdued by tender glances and sweet words of remonstrance, which haunt the memory amid

the bustle and struggles of after life, like gentle spirits that would woo us back to the scenes where, lured by ambition or driven by necessity, we said good-bye to happiness, peradventure never to fall in with it again anywhere else upon this wide earth's surface!

Con Cooney sat for some time alone by the turf fire, after his mother and sister had retired to rest. But in spite of the genial glow of the turf fire, and the chirp of the cricket, and thoughts of Julia Flynn's violet eyes, Con Cooney let his chin drop down upon his chest, and looked like a man who felt humbled and ashamed of himself. When the frugal evening meal had been despatched, and Mrs. Cooney had resumed her knitting in the corner, and Mave her fine-lady pose in front of the fire, the old woman said, as she recovered the big ball of grey yarn that had accidentally rolled from her side, "Have ye any news at all afther the day?"

"Not a word strange," Con replied, letting his chair swing back, and turning his eyes towards the collar-beams.

"I think you have some news, Con," his sister remarked, with a side-long look, in which her mother detected something that made her drop the ball into her lap and look inquiringly into her son's face.

"Well," returned Con rather solemnly, as he let his chair come down upon all-fours, and changed his gaze from the collar-beams to the turf fire, from which a bright blaze unexpectedly leaped up like a laugh from a warm heart, "there is somethin' I have to tell you, but someway, I'd rather put it off till to-morrow or afther."

"What is id?" his mother asked a little anxiously, and impatiently turned to Mave, who only let her eyelids drop, as if the unexpected blaze of the turf fire had dazzled her, and tried hard to keep her rosy lips quiet and immovable.

"None uv yer humbuggin'," continued Mrs. Cooney, indignantly. "Tell me at wanst."

"'Tis nothin' that you'll be sorry to hear," said Con,

seeming wholly preoccupied by the vagaries of the turf fire, which seemed to be blowing off flames like bubbles, and trying to send them up the chimney without bursting.

"An' if id isn't, why don't you tell it?" retorted his mother, impatiently.

"Well, the short an' the long uv id is," returned Con, "I proposed for Julia Flynn to-day, and herself and her father is satisfied."

The old woman, to her son's surprise and disappointment, looked very serious, if not pained, and remained so long silent that Con turned round in his chair with an expression of alarm in his wide-open eyes.

"There's not a girl in Ireland I'd rather see you married to," said Mrs. Cooney, speaking slowly and deliberately. "But, Con, what will Mave do?"

"Mave's mild, blue eyes opened in unfeigned wonder, as she asked—

"Why so, mother? Sure there's nothing 'ud make me so happy as to have Julia my sister-in-law."

"Foolishness, my child," returned her mother. "Do you think," she continued, turning to her son, "can he give her any fortune at all?"

"I don't say he can," Con answered, showing very plainly by voice and look that the question annoyed him. "He was obliged to ask time to pay the rent on his garden this turn."

"Ah, Con," said his mother, with a sigh, "you never think on anybody but yourself."

"Oh, mother," remonstrated Mave, "how can you say that." And Mave looked down at her nice brown stuff dress—off the same piece as Miss Alice Cormack's—which Con had bought for her at Christmas. And as soon as the next firkin was filled he'd give her a beautiful striped calico one like Julia Flynn's, but Mrs. Cooney only shook her head.

Old Joe Cooney had a sister, a good deal older than himself, who, after his marriage, finding that she could be of no further use to him upon his mountain farm,

set up a little dealing for herself in the village of Shannacloagh, and, never having been married, was able at her death to leave her brother fifty pounds sterling, besides her furniture. This fifty pounds old Joe Cooney left, by will, to his second son and namesake and his daughter Mave, to be divided equally between them. But Con thought he could do wonders with this money, and got his brother and sister to consent to his drawing it out of the bank, where, as he explained, it was "lying idle," and only paying ridiculously low interest, whereas he, Con Cooney, the cleverest and most hard-working, and, above all, wide-a-wake fellow to be met with in a month of Sundays, would be able to double and treble and quadruple that fifty pounds in less than no time. And it was truly wonderful the number of "five-pound notes," and "three-pound notes," and even "ten-pound notes" that Con Cooney used to make by his transactions in buying and selling cattle; and it was very curious that profits should always exactly correspond in value to one or other of the above-named "notes." It is, however, to be feared that Con always forgot to speak of losses. At all events, in a marvelously short space of time, during which he won golden opinions at Cork from all sorts of people, and was regarded with affectionate pride by the confraternity of cattle-jobbers (who drank a great deal of whiskey at his expense), Con Cooney found himself one fine morning, after taking up a three-months' bill in the bank, with an empty pocket and his little mountain farm not half stocked. And—what was worse than the loss of time and money—he had contracted those "spending" habits about which Rody Flynn read him that lecture which, in conjunction with the wounded hand and dread of the workhouse hospital, really seemed to have the effect of opening his eyes, at least partially, to his vanity and folly. Honest Joe never murmured at the loss of his little "fortune." And for gentle Mave, she never thought of the loss of hers at all. So that Con, whose obliviousness of his own shortcomings

was only equalled by his vivid consciousness of the many good qualities which he unquestionably possessed, easily persuaded himself that his brother and sister had no grounds at all for complaint, but on the contrary, that he himself, and he alone, was the sufferer, and that his "disappointments" were to be attributed not to any recklessness or want of judgment or "spending" propensities on his part, but rather a combination of untoward circumstances—a conspiracy, in fact, between the clouds, which rained at the wrong, and wouldn't let down a single drop at the right time, during the summer, and a rascal named Manus M'Swiggins, whom he had been induced—tempted chiefly by an Albert guard worn by the said Manus—to join in an exporting speculation. Poor Joe went cheerfully to service to the priest—which he said was a different thing from becoming a man-servant, seeing that he served mass in the Clerk's absence, and was generally respected as a semi-ecclesiastical person—and Mave remained in her mountain home contented and happy, as fresh and pure as the mountain breezes that fanned her brow, and gave the bloom of the wild bramble-rose to her cheek.

And Mave is now wondering why her mother should say that Con thought of no one but himself, with that brown stuff gown before her eyes, and after being told of the promise of the striped calico one. But Mave never thought that Con's own vanity was concerned in the matter. What would people say if his sister was not well dressed? And neither did Mave give a thought to the fact that the stuff gown was bought out of the price of the two-year-old heifer which Joe gave to his brother to sell, while he was kept idle by the wounded hand, though Father Feehan was giving the grass of the heifer for nothing.

"Ah! poor Joe, too," said Mrs. Cooney, who *did* remember these things; "afther givin' you his heifer an' all."

"What difference did it make to him?" returned Con. "He that has no rent to pay or anything."

"Oh, Con!" said his mother, bending down her head and covering her face with her hands, "I'm afeerd you have no heart at all."

Mave unclasped her hands, which had rested all this time on her knees, and let them drop straight down by her sides. She was startled and bewildered at hearing such a thing said of Con, who was such a general favourite.

But when Mave and her mother had gone into the room, and Con Cooney was left alone by the turf fire, it began to dawn upon him that he was not at all the fine generous fellow he thought himself. The look in his face as he sat there, with his chin resting on his chest, would have pained Julia Flynn if she could have seen it, even more than did that heart-broken, despairing gaze with which he regarded her the day she undid the string that kept his coat from getting off his shoulders when his arm was in the sling. There was *shame* as well as sorrow in his look now. And turning quickly round as if to hide his face from the flickering turf fire, he leant his forehead upon the back of the straw-bottom chair, and burst into tears.

At that same moment Mave was dropping to sleep with a happy smile upon her rosy mouth; for in fancy she saw Charley Flynn coming up through the purple heather the same as always.

And what of poor Joe?

He has just finished rubbing down Father Clancy's old grey mare to the tune of "The Unfortunate Rake;" and as he flings away the wisp of straw, suddenly changes the whistle to a song, and chanting softly, while his hand slides along the grey mare's back from the shoulder to the tail, "Arise, bonnie lassie, we'll bundle and go."

The cricket chirped frantically for five minutes, as if to rouse Con Cooney from the stupor into which the newly-awakened consciousness of his selfish disposition had cast him, and then stopped; while the turf fire, as if convinced of the uselessness of wasting its smiles upon him, drew a veil of grey ashes over its face. All was silence and gloom for hours, as Con Cooney sat there

with his forehead resting upon the back of the straw-bottom chair.

"'Tis all clear to me now," he thought; "but what kept me from seein' it before?"

"Self, self, self!" shrillily replied the cricket.

"But, plase God," added Con Cooney, turning round in his chair and sitting upright, with a manly, hopeful expression on his face, which a while before looked almost mean—"plase God, I'll be able to make it all up to them yet. I *had* a right to think of Mave," he went on, "an' of Joe, too." 'Twould be better for me if they refused to give me their money; for what I took from 'em done me no good. But I suppose," he added, after a pause, "if they refused me I'd be sayin' I'd be a rich man now on'y for 'em. But Julia is a sinsible girl, an' I'll make it all right yet," thought Con Cooney, rising briskly from the straw-bottom chair.

The cock, from his roost over the jennet's stable, proclaimed the dawning of a new day, the cricket behind the pot-hangers answered with a merry, though a somewhat drowsy and uncertain chirp; and, strange to say, the grey soil fell from the turf fire, which sent up one bright flicker and then sunk down into its bed of ashes.

"'Tis a sign uv good luck," said Con, treading as lightly as he could over the earthen floor so as to reach his bedroom without disturbing his mother and sister, or making them aware of his having remained so many hours in the straw-bottom chair before the turf fire, which his mother had called out to him, through the closed door of her room, not to forget raking, as she sprinkled Mave very liberally with holy water from the yellow earthenware bottle, with a stout cord round its neck, which hung from a nail in the bed-post.

CHAPTER XXII.

A VISIT TO THE IVIED FARMHOUSE, WHICH TAKES MRS. DWYER BY SURPRISE—UP THE BROWN ROCK—FATHER FEEHAN PASSES ALICE ON THE LAWN—A DESPATCH WHICH PREVENTED MARTIN DWYER AND SEVERAL OTHERS FROM SLEEPING.

"It is a beautiful day," said Mrs. Cormack; "and I never saw the place look so pretty."

"Splendid weather," returned her husband, glancing upwards at the cloudless sky. "The hay is heavier than I ever saw it for the last five-and-twenty years."

"The chestnuts are looking lovely," rejoined his wife; "but they always remind me of how old we are getting."

"Old!" ejaculated Ned Cormack, glancing at the graceful little figure beside him. "Don't talk of age. You are as young as you were the first day you put your head under the old thatched roof."

"We have been very happy, Edward," she replied, with a shade of melancholy in her voice. "We have much reason to be grateful and"—she added after a pause—"contented."

"That's true, Margaret," Ned Cormack assented; "and for my part I *am* contented, though you sometimes seem to suspect that I am not."

"Oh, no!" said Mrs. Cormack, speaking more quickly, "I don't think that at all. But still you *are* changed, and you won't tell me the reason."

"It is only your fancy," he replied, turning away his head with a conscious look. "In what way do you notice me changed?"

"I have observed many little things," she answered; "and latterly I have thought your mind must be troubled. You seem restless and uneasy sometimes."

They had walked slowly from the house, and were standing within a few yards of the avenue-gate, where little Eddy was reining in the black cob with all his might, as if that sober animal had a mind to fly over or through the iron bars, which were of spotless whiteness, having been freshly painted, by Mrs. Cormack's directions, the day before Alice's return home.

Ned Cormack made no reply to his wife's last observation; but she noticed with a vague sense of alarm that his eyes involuntarily turned to the ivied farm-house beyond the river.

Tom Dwyer happened at the moment to be leading one of the horses down the hill by the forelock, and the thought, "Could *he* have anything to do with it?" at once started to Mrs. Cormack's mind; but it was as an idle fancy after a moment's reflection.

"Is it on account of Margaret?" she asked, after a minute's silence.

"Perhaps so," he replied with a start. "I wish you could get the notion out of her head altogether."

"I wish I could," she replied. "But it is very unpleasant. It is understood everywhere that they are engaged. His visits here were so frequent at first, and they were so often together in different places, I almost think it is too late to put a stop to it now. Is there no chance of your being able to come to an understanding with him?"

"Not the least," was the abrupt reply. "I told Father Feehan the day of the station that under no consideration would I give more than a thousand pounds."

"It is a great deal," said his wife, knitting her brows. "He has acted very wrongly. I see now why he has

kept away for the past month. It is really very distressing. But I had a presentiment from the first that unpleasantness would come of it."

"He says," returned her husband, "that a thousand pounds would only ruin him, as all the creditors would be down on him."

"What sort of property has he?" Mrs. Cormack asked.

"Nothing but a good cheap farm," her husband replied. "If the debts were cleared off he'd be comfortable. That's all."

"I'm sorry I didn't go with you for Alice," returned Mrs. Cormack, with a troubled look. "I could have talked the matter over with Mrs. Bernard, and I know her advice would be a help to me."

"That's the very reason I went myself," said Ned Cormack. "Whenever my mind is troubled, I always wish to have a talk with Ellen Dwyer."

"And what did she say?"

"Well, in the first place she never thought Margaret had a vocation to be a nun; but as for O'Keeffe, she could give no opinion. She never saw him or heard of him; and knew nothing about his family except that they were 'great people' in her young days."

Ned Cormack lifted Eddy from the saddle and placed him upon his feet upon the soft fresh grass.

"Do you know," he said, as he twisted his hand in the black cob's mane, "I'm gettin' very stiff. I think I'll buy that gig from Tom Meagher, as he's offering it to me so cheap."

His wife looked anxiously at him as he held the stirrup, seeming to think the exertion to mount too much for him. But seeing that his eyes dwelt wistfully upon his little son, Mrs. Cormack smiled.

"Yes," said she, "you ought to buy the gig. I could go with you to Knockgrana sometimes myself. I'm quite anxious to see Molly Dee's house."

"You'll have a stiff walk up the hill before you see Molly Dee's house," returned her husband.

"I know that," she replied. "But when you have the gig, Eddie and I will go up there."

"Is it where Ponsonby and Bob Dee live?" Eddie asked. "There it is beyond, but you couldn't see it in the day. You could only see the light in the night in winter time."

"Very well," returned his father, laughing; "but mind, I can't drive you all the way up there. Open the gate, Eddy, my man."

Eddy pressed his fat hand upon the latch, and the white gate swung smoothly open.

Ned Cornack rode over Corringlea Bridge at a snail's pace, turning his head and keeping his eyes fixed upon his wife as she walked slowly back to the house, over the soft level lawn, holding little Eddie by the hand, and pointing with her parasol to the largest of the chestnut trees all covered with white flowers. He kept his eyes persistently turned away from Martin Dwyer's house as he rode on, not even casting a glance upon the orchard, and trying to look at his own house and his own fields over the long meadow without seeing it.

"Really," Margaret was saying to her sister as their mother entered the parlour, "that old man has quite turned your head with his poetry and nonsense."

"Oh! you are jealous," replied Alice, raising her head and flinging her dark hair back from her face, which, her mother noticed with a smile, was suffused with a deep blush. She was writing out a copy of the verses which Mr. Armstrong had presented her with to send to the most poetical and sentimental of her late school-fellows. She wanted sympathy, and in this matter at least, had to avail of Her Majesty's mail, as her sister had none for her.

"Jealous!" rejoined Margaret, with a look of sovereign contempt, as she let her head rest against the back of her favourite low chair. "I wish you joy of your admirer and his silvery locks."

"'Tis better to be an old man's darling than a young man's slave," said their mother, laughingly.

Margaret bit her under lip, and really looked cross. She has grown, if possible, more beautiful since we saw her last in that low chair, yet people have noticed a change, not only in her manner, but in her looks, which is certainly not for the better. Even our little friends, Nannie and Nellie, noticed it, and could not feel comfortable latterly in Miss Cormack's company, though she did sometimes condescend to be civil to them. They could not very well explain what it was they objected to in the beauty of Rockview House, except that "she always had a *nose on her*." A faultless one it was, we happen to know of our own knowledge, so far as outline was concerned. As different as possible from a nose we once knew, of which a matter-of-fact friend said that "any break up would be an improvement." Yet we dare say our fair young readers will understand what Nannie and Nellie meant. And we venture to express a hope that not one of them, by any chance or accident, will, even for a single instant, be seen with a "nose on her." For, take our word for it, a "nose" will utterly destroy the charm of the fairest face that ever "ould Nature" moulded.

"Did anybody do anything to Tom Dwyer?" Alice asked, as she slipped her letter into the square envelope, the question being probably suggested by the recollection that Tom used to call in on his way to the village, and bring her letters to the post office.

"No," her mother replied, looking up in some surprise; "why do you ask?"

"Because I have not seen him yet," returned Alice, dipping her pen in the ink to write the superscription, "except," she added, correcting herself, "that he was standing in the field with Mr. Armstrong when we were passing over the bridge."

"This is Saturday," said Mrs. Cormack, "and the children are not at school. You and Margaret may as well take a walk over and bring them back with you. I intended going myself, but I have too many things to do to-day."

"Yes," returned Alice, rising and putting away the writing materials; "we will have time to go up as far as the Brown Rock. I was wishing to sit upon the heath and look down on the valley. It always makes me feel young again."

Mrs. Cormack laughed; for Alice heaved a sigh as she uttered these last words wearily and regretfully, like one quite weighed down by years and trouble.

"Of course you'll go, Margaret," she remarked, pausing in the doorway and turning towards her elder daughter with a shade of anxiety in her look. "You have not been out so much as you ought for some time back."

"Well, I'll go," Margaret replied, amiably, as if she was quite prepared to cheerfully submit to any amount of self-sacrifice to oblige her mother.

The white greyhound sprang over the pig trough, which happened to be in a direct line between the sunny spot upon which he had been dozing and the yard gate, startling Mrs. Dwyer, who was paddling with a short stick in the steaming semi-fluid repast, which Cauth had just discharged from a black pot of monstrous dimensions for the use and benefit of a new brood of "darlings," quite as noisy and restless and given to unexpected and sudden transitions of mood as their predecessors of a year ago.

Mrs. Dwyer did the paddling very carefully and softly, moving the short stick round and round and backward and forward through the thick fluid to the admiration of Cauth Manogue, who looked on smilingly with her hands clasped behind her back.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Mrs. Dwyer, with a start, and standing upright, "'twas well he didn't jump into my face."

A broad grin of delight upon Cauth's broad face, as she looked towards the gate and saw the white greyhound gambolling and bounding round and round Miss Alice Cormack, made Cauth's mistress turn her head to see what it was all about. And the moment she caught sight of the two young ladies, Mrs. Dwyer flung the short

stick out of her hand, and made for the kitchen door, as if she were running from an enemy from whom no quarter was to be expected.

"What is it?" Nannie and Nellie asked on seeing their mother's frightened face. But Mrs. Dwyer had not breath left to reply. She hurried into her bed-room and holding her face down to the looking-glass, looked earnestly, but doubtfully, at the reflection therein, as if she had serious misgivings regarding her own identity. Hurriedly untying the string of her cap and pushing back her hair, a careful scrutiny of the left jaw seemed to convince her that she really was herself after all. Then Mrs. Dwyer retied the string in a becoming bow-knot, and pressed her open hands upon the cap all round, as if to stick it to her head—taking particular pains with the portion that covered her ears. And, having let the ends of her shawl—which were knotted behind her back—drop down gracefully in front, Mrs. Dwyer came out to greet her visitors with an air of quiet dignity, which contrasted so strikingly with the frightened look and the race through the yard, that Alice had to laugh outright while shaking hands, managing, however, to put the blame of this untimely mirth upon Nannie and Nellie, who were both clinging round her waist. Martin Dwyer, too, hurried in from the kitchen-garden, where the late cabbage planting was proceeding, to welcome Alice in the simple friendly way she much liked; asking her, "How were they all in the convent," and "was the old gardener alive still," and divers similar questions which Alice replied to in a manner that might be described as seriously cheerful.

"We're going up as far as the rock, Mrs. Dwyer," said Alice, when Martin, declaring that he "must be off," had gone back to his cabbage planting; "and will you allow Nannie and Nellie to come with us? Mamma also desired us to bring them over when we are coming back. She seldom sees them now except on Sundays, she says."

"Why not? Of course they can go," was the reply,

accompanied by a look of beaming delight. "But," added Mrs. Dwyer, suddenly becoming severely dignified, "I make them go to school regularly, and they must study their lessons every evening."

While Nannie and Nellie ran for their hats in a state of excitement which the occasion scarcely warranted, Tom made his appearance and shook Alice by the hand in a careless sort of way, remarking that he would have called to see her, but "something or other" prevented him. He was now in a great hurry about "something or other," but hoped to be able to run over "tomorrow or after." Alice remarked to her sister, as they toiled up through the ferns, that she had never seen Tom Dwyer looking so well.

"That grey suit becomes him," returned Margaret. "I wanted Robert to get one like it. I'm tired of seeing him always in a black coat and leather gloves."

"He knows better than that," said Alice. "If he had that grey suit on—which, by-the-bye, is quite worn at the elbows—he'd look like a little stable boy."

"Really, Alice!"

"Oh, don't be offended," Alice went on. "But some men are nothing if not exquisite; and Mr. O'Keeffe is one of them."

"You have no taste," said Margaret, throwing her long golden curls back over her shoulders, and turning round partly to take a look at the green expanses below, and partly to take breath. Alice turned round too, and so did Nannie and Nellie.

It is not every day such a group is to be met with even on an Irish hill-side, and, as if to give the finishing touch to the picture, the white greyhound put himself into the very place and posture that a painter would have put him.

"How quiet and beautiful it is," said Alice. "I'd never be tired of it—never wish to leave it."

"That's what I always think when I see people going to America," returned Nannie. "I wonder their hearts don't break."

"But they can't help going," said Nellie.

"I think some of them could," returned her sister, putting her arm into Alice's, as if she felt the need of support. "I have a great fear sometimes, since I heard them talking about the landlords, one day that Bill Keerawan was within. And I never felt the fear so strong as I do now," Nannie added tearfully, and beginning to tremble.

Alice looked at her little friend in surprise, and, drawing her close to her, bent down and imprinted a kiss upon her smooth, soft cheek.

"You are very sensitive, Nannie," she said. "I always noticed that; but I think you are strong, too. Your aunt and I often talked about you and Nellie. She is greatly pleased to see by your letters that you are so much improved during the past year."

"It is because we went to school regularly, and kept our places in the class," said Nellie, who seemed to take things lightly.

"It is too far to the Brown Rock," Margaret remarked, looking up the hill. "I'll sit down here till you come back."

Miss Cormack was not so fond of walking as she used to be. Her mother had observed this with concern, and the little excursion to the Brown Rock was suggested principally to induce Margaret to go out into the open air. But Mrs. Dwyer was heard to remark approvingly that Margaret was becoming a sensible girl, as she was scarcely ever seen "marching" up and down by the river now. Mrs. Dwyer "always liked to see girls becoming sensible and industrious."

Margaret was quite taken by surprise when her three companions came upon her with a rush and flung themselves upon the ferns beside her, panting for breath after their race down the hill, in which Alice had "come to grief" no less than three different times, to the infinite delight of Nellie and Nannie, who were as sure-footed on the steep and rugged mountain side as any pair of young goats in Kerry or elsewhere, that ever disturbed the equanimity of Sub-Constable Joe Sproule.

"Oh!" exclaimed Margaret, "you did not go up to the Rock."

"Yes," Alice replied panting for breath; "and rested for a while under it. I'm fairly killed trying to keep up with these fairies, and they are not a bit tired."

"I really did not feel the time passing," said Margaret, who looked refreshed and invigorated by the cool breeze. "I'd like to stay here for hours yet."

Both Nannie and Nellie noticed that Margaret did not look a bit "haughty" to-day, and that she "had not the least sign of 'a nose' on her."

"'Tis very pleasant," returned Alice, fanning her face with her broad straw hat; "How ungallant Tom has become. There he is, lounging through the field instead of escorting us up the hill, as he always used. He seems to have lost all his politeness. But who is that riding down the avenue?" Alice asked, shading her eyes with her hand. "I was going to bring the field-glass, but forgot it."

Margaret looked up with a start.

"I thought it was Mr. Cormack," said Nellie; "but here he is coming round the turn of the road."

"It is Father Feehan," said Nannie, as the horseman dismounted at the glass porch.

"Oh, let us go," exclaimed Alice, excitedly. "I suppose he has come to see me."

"You need not be in such a hurry," returned her sister. "He won't run away."

"I have a mind to run straight down and get over the river," said Alice. "But I'd be afraid he might see me and say I was crazy."

"So you are," returned Margaret, laughing. "Mr. Armstrong has a great deal to answer for. You say everybody is thinking of you. Now, I'd venture to bet that Father Feehan does not even know that you have come home."

Alice resumed her seat upon the ferns with a conscious blush. It did look like presumption to assume that

Father Feehan had come specially to see *her*. But though the words had escaped her lips, her only feeling while she uttered them was a great *longing* to be near Father Feehan—to get the light but kindly pressure of his hand, to hear his low sweet voice, and to look into his smooth, ruddy, handsome face, beaming, as she believed it always did, with loving kindness for all the world. There were people who, to be sure, said of Father Feehan that there was “nothing soft about him but his face;” but Alice could see nothing but softness and sweetness in the parish priest of Shannaclough, who, to her mind, was simply perfection in every way. She curbed her impatience, however, and accommodated her pace to her sister’s as they slowly descended to the foot of the hill. Margaret objected to the path to the bridge through the long meadow; and Alice, who was prone to consult other people’s wishes, turned from the wooden gate and proceeded along the road, observing, as she reclosed the gate, that her father had dismounted from the black cob in the middle of the avenue and lifted little Eddy into the saddle.

Margaret took it into her head to delay an unconscionably long time upon the bridge; and, instead of going straight to the house from the avenue gate, nothing would suit her but to cross to the river, and “march” on by the hazels, as if she were wistfully bent upon returning to her old ways and losing the good opinion of Mrs. Dwyer. Alice patted the head of the white greyhound, and tried to talk cheerfully to Nannie and Nellie; but looking wistfully all the time towards the drawing-room windows, and feeling annoyed in spite of herself at her sister’s waywardness. At length Miss Cormack bent her steps towards the house; but before they had got half the way Father Feehan was seen leading his horse by the bridle along the winding avenue; and it at once struck Alice as strange that her father did not accompany him, as was his wont, to the gate.

“Walk faster, Margaret,” she said. “I think he does not see us.”

Margaret did quicken her pace ; but the priest kept on his way without seeming to notice them. He was passing the nearest point of the avenue to them when Alice started off at a run to meet him, under the impression that he did not see them. But suddenly she stood still, as if a bullet had struck her. Father Feehan paused, looked straight in her face with knitted brows, and passed on. Alice's lips parted, and with a bewildered look she gazed after the priest as he walked slowly towards the gate, keeping his eyes fixed upon the ground.

"What is it?" Alice asked, in a terrified whisper, turning to her sister, who had just come up to where she was standing.

"I can't imagine," Margaret replied, looking frightened also. "Might it be anything about—." She checked herself on observing that Nannie's dark eyes were fixed wonderingly upon her face.

"Oh! Alice," said Nannie, her blue eyes filling with tears, "don't look so frightened. If you saw how white your face is."

"Let us go in and ask what has happened," said Margaret, with a frown. "If something has annoyed him that's no reason why he should treat us in such a way."

"Oh! mamma," exclaimed Alice, bursting into the drawing-room, "what has happened? Why would not Father Feehan speak to me?"

Mrs. Cormack compressed her lips and cast her eyes upon the carpet, while her husband started up from his chair, and commenced walking up and down the room rubbing his chin hard, as if it had suddenly become intolerably itchy. Alice was looking in mute bewilderment from one to the other, when Margaret, who had waited to hang up her straw hat in the hall, entered the room, and with affected indifference, asked—

"Well, what is it all about?"

"Nothing of any great consequence," replied the mother, "so far as I can see. Come in," she added;

smiling, and beckoning with her finger to Nannie and Nellie, who remained outside the door in doubt as to whether they ought to follow Alice and Margaret into the drawing-room.

"But *what* is it, mamma?" Alice asked, appealingly.

"Only a young gentleman that wants to become a Member of Parliament," returned her mother; "and your father won't vote for him."

"Oh! and won't Father Feehan be friends with us any more?" Alice asked, piteously.

"He's just after saying that he'd never put his foot inside the door of this house again," returned her mother.

"'Tis simply disgusting" said Margaret, scornfully.

But Alice dropped into a chair, and, with her arms resting upon the table, covered her face with her hands, feeling utterly miserable.

Nellie said to Nannie on their way home in the evening, that it was the first dull evening that they had ever spent at Mrs. Cormack's.

"Because," returned Nannie, "Mr. Cormack is going to vote against the priest."

"It is easy to see," said Nellie, "that he is very uneasy and unhappy."

"I felt something hanging over me all this day," Nannie remarked, as they stood for a moment on the bridge.

"Do you remember how miserable and heart-broken our father was last year when he thought there was going to be an election?"

"Yes," Nellie replied; "because he was going against the landlord."

"So whatever way people go," rejoined Nellie, "they are miserable and unhappy. I wish there were no elections in Ireland at all."

"Oh! Nellie," whispered Nannie, just as the old clock in the parlour had struck one, "do you hear poor father moaning in his sleep?"

"Yes," returned Nellie; "but I don't think he's

asleep. I'm listening to him since the clock struck twelve."

Nellie was right. Martin Dwyer never closed an eye that night. Neither did his prosperous neighbour, Ned Cormack. Neither did a single individual of that little crowd of tenant farmers we saw shivering under the leafless tree in Mr. Percy Perrington's lawn one day in the month of December—excepting only Con Cooney, who lived too far up the mountain to have learned until next day that a special despatch had come to the parish priest of Shannaclough from the Hon. Horatio O'Mulligan, commencing with the ominous and startling words—"The crisis is upon us."

CHAPTER XXIII.

FATHER FEEHAN HINTS THAT THERE ARE BLACK SHEEP IN HIS PARISH—IN CALCULATING THE VALUE OF HIS POTATO-CROP, RODY FLYNN THROWS THE BLOSSOMS INTO THE SCALE—JIM FOLEY GIVES A BROAD HINT TO THE LITTLE COOPER OF THE HIGH HONOUR HE INTENDS TO DO HIM—MR. ROBERT O'KEEFFE IS IN HIGH SPIRITS, AND THE SCHOOL-MASTER EXPECTS A STIRRING TIME.

THE next day was Sunday. Had you been standing with us under one of the two elm trees inside the gate of Shannaclough chapel-yard you would, unless you happen to be a very unobservant person, have been struck by the number of pale and anxious faces among the congregation coming out from first Mass; and it would probably have caused you some surprise to observe that many of these anxious faces belong to comfortable-looking and apparently well-to-do farmers of the "middling" class. Even those large farmers coming round from the gallery doors wear grave and troubled looks; and some of them glance furtively and suspiciously towards the knot of village politicians who have come together on the road outside the gate, as if each thought that the question under discussion while he passed was the part he himself was likely to play in the present "crisis." Father Feehan had repeated that word "crisis" very often in his address to the electors from the altar steps. The only question, however, under discussion among the politicians was whether Father Feehan's allusion to "black

sheep" was meant to apply to any one in particular, or only used in a general way. Rody Flynn favoured the latter supposition, maintaining that the parish priest had only intended to warn the voters to "go the right way." But Davy Lacy had serious doubts upon the point, and thought there was something in Father Feehan's voice and look that plainly indicated that he had "someone in his eye."

"Well," said Rody Flynn cheerfully, "there's nothing certain yet. It may be a walk over, as it was the last time."

This speech had a visibly cheering effect upon half-a-dozen free and independent electors, who had ventured to draw within hearing; but drew upon Rody Flynn the anger of Larry Foley, who, turning upon him with a bitter scowl, reminded him that the last was "not a *general election*."

"No matter," returned Rody Flynn; "there may be no opposition."

"Did you ever see a general election without a contest?" Larry Foley asked, through his clenched teeth. But Rody Flynn did not reply. He saw Mr. Cormack beckoning to him from inside the chapel-gate, just as Father Feehan was coming out. No one took any notice of the fact that the priest had passed Ned Cormack and his wife and daughter without even a nod of recognition.

But Julia Flynn, who was talking to Alice, saw that her lips trembled as she reciprocated Julia's congratulations on her good looks. They were waiting for the car, which, as usual, was put up in Rody Flynn's yard, so that Rody thought Mr. Cormack merely wanted to pass away the time with a chat about the coming election. But to the delight of the little cooper, Mr. Cormack gave him an order for a quantity of dairy utensils, which was a great piece of good luck to him just then, particularly as several of the articles required were already made, and had remained on his hands and been exhibited outside his door every Sunday and holiday for the past eleven months.

"What did he want you for?" Davy Lacy asked, when Rody had rejoined the group outside the gate.

"He's afther ordering a lot of things," was the reply. "An' fortunately, I have the most of 'em made since last summer. I thought I could never sell 'em, so many are turning to dry stock."

"'Tis a great satisfaction to work for that man," Davy Lacy remarked, looking after the car, which attracted more than usual attention, it being Alice's first appearance since her return from school.

This assertion of the shoemaker's met with the general assent of his auditors, and Ned Cormack was spoken of in terms of the highest praise. Larry Foley thought to return to the charge on the subject of the impossibility of an uncontested general election; but Rody Flynn took refuge in "the Queen's County," and entertaining his hearers with a story that had no reference whatever to general elections, but proved, nevertheless, so interesting and amusing that the bell rang for second Mass before it was concluded, to the great disappointment of the listeners. In fact, the "crisis" was by no means a matter of absorbing interest up to this in Shannaclough, except to the voters, who scarcely knew whether to look upon the indifference of the general public as a matter for regret or congratulation. Rody Flynn, we feel bound to record—for it is not our own views or opinions we are giving here, or elsewhere in this history—attributed the indifference to which we have just alluded altogether to a want of patriotic spirit in the country.

"I never saw anything that's gone like the country," he said to Davy Lacy, as they walked out in the evening to the "garden," in which the wheat and the potatoes have changed places since last you saw it. "There's not a bit of sperrit in the young men now. They never look at a paper; they care for nothin' but whiskey. You never see a hurlin' or manly exercise of any kind. Walk out in the country of a Sunday, an' 'tis

moochin' about the ditches you'll see 'em, pretendin' to be smokin' their pipes, or card-playin', or blaguardin' in holes and corners."

"That's a fact," returned Davy Lacy; "but so far as that boy o' mine is concerned, 'tis at the concertina he spends the Sunday."

"He's a quiet, harmless boy," said Rody Flynn; "but man or boy at—at sedentary work all the week, requires a little open air—recreation occasionally." Rody had a little struggle to catch the words "sedentary" and "recreation," and emphasised them accordingly.

"That's a fact," returned Davy Lacy; "but there's no inducement to bring the people together now as there used to be. 'Tis a fine thing to see a lot of boys an' girls full of life an' spirits at a hurlin' or football match. I was talkin' to some of the boys to clear up Bully's Acre an' revive the nine-holes. But they think the priests are against everything now in the shape of a getherin'. And as you say, 'tis stretched by the ditches or in holes an' corners you'll find the young people now."

"They're gone," said Rody Flynn, as he held open the wooden gate for his friend to pass into the garden—the little brown cow looking up and welcoming them with a soft low. "There's no spirit in the present generation."

"I'm told," returned his companion, "that it is not so in other places. A very intelligent man from Ballycavin was speakin' to me a short time since; and he says there's something goin' on for certain."

"Charlie made some remarks in his last letter," said Rody Flynn, "from which I'd infer he had somethin' in his mind that there was a stir in Ireland. But I told Julia to tell him that so far as this place was concerned, Ireland was dead."

The conversation was here suspended, as they had to walk in single file along the narrow path parallel with the potato-ridges, till they came to the headland at

the upper end of the field where they could walk side by side up and down in the shade of the hawthorns.

"People tell me," said Rody Flynn, stopping in the middle of the headland and looking round him, "People tell me it would be better for me to sell this little spot, as I could get a nice sum for the good-will of it. An' if I was only to look to profit an' loss, I know I ought to sell it. There's that three-quarters of potatoes now, an' unless they turn out better than they did for the last dozen years they won't pay me for the cost of labour an' the value of the manure. Even the grain of whate afther won't come to much. But," added Rody Flynn, taking a general survey of his little farm, "you might as well tell me to buy my coffin as to part with it. Sure I got what is better than money out of it. If I hadn't it we wouldn't be out here this fine evenin'. What a pleasure it is to see them little stalks peepin' over ground, an' to watch 'em gettin' bigger an' bigger till they're in full blossom. 'Tis a grand sight to see a nice lot of potatoes in full blossom. You'll be sure of thirty barrels to the quarter until the blight comes. An' if they turn out even middlin' you'll be satisfied; an' 'tis a great pleasure to give a little employment, an to treat men well while they're at work for you."

"You're right," returned Davy Lacy, solemnly. "Things are not to be valued at the price they'll bring in the market. There's that red cock of mine; an', as my wife says, what good is he? If he'd even lay an odd egg for us, she says, there might be some sense in keeping him. She has a great prejudice against that bird because he frightens her, he has such quare humours. The fact is, the woman is superstitious. She thinks he is not a right cock. An' when he goes on makin' sounds in his throat, like as if he was talkin' French to himself, and shakin' his combs and his wattles, an' thryin' to look at the two sides of him at wance with the wan eye—'tis quare," added Davy Lacy, looking suddenly into his companion's laughing face with an expression of intense sorrow. "The real cause of her prejudice to the cock," he

went on, after a pause, "is because he's blind of an eye. Though, as Mr. Sweeny remarked, she tries to put it upon his incapacity for layin'. He's very hoarse, too," added Davy Lacy.

"Begor, he is," interrupted Rody Flynn, raising his eyebrows; "I never heard such a voice with a cock—except wan thoroughbred game bird I knew in the Queen's County."

"Well," said Davy Lacy, pitching his shoulders and moving his hands uneasily, as if he wished to have them out of the sleeves as on a working day, "I wouldn't like to mention the sum that 'ud tempt me to part with that cock. 'Dick,' I'll say—an' down he'll drop from the cross-beam, an' look straight at me with his neck twisted till you'd be sure the eye was in the middle of his forehead. I'll toss him a crumb of bread an' he'll ketch it in his bill before it touches the ground. Then he'll twist his head about, an' shake his combs as if they war bells an' he wanted to ring 'em as loud as he could, an' go on talkin' French to himself till my wife gets frightened an' blesses herself. He's ragged and battered-lookin'," continued the shoemaker, feelingly. "An' between pigs an' childher, an' that ould gander of the Widow Dunphy's, 'tis seldom he has a whole feather in his tail. He's despised by high an' low. No one has the least regard for that poor bird but myself, an' that little gray cat you gave me. *She* likes 'Dick.' I can see it by the way she looks up an' mee-yows at him when he settles himself on the collar-beam. But I wouldn't miss that poor bird, blind of an eye as he is, an' with a stump of a tail like a worn-out broom, I wouldn't miss him from my flure when I sit down to my breakfast to-morrow for what I won't mention."

"You're right," exclaimed Rody Flynn, laughing; "I understand it all."

"Some people are too apt to overlook feelin' when calculatin' the value of things," continued Davy Lacy, looking reproachfully into the little cooper's sparkling eyes. "As you said of the potatoes, there's more to

be looked to than their value by the stone or the barul. The feelin's you had—an' that you would'nt have on'y for them potatoes—while you war plantin' 'em an' while they war growin', should be calculated. An' though the blight comes an' you are disappointed this year, you'll hope they'll escape next year, and so you'll go on gettin' the same feelin's out of 'em every year, whether the blight comes or not. People will laugh at this, an' say feelin' won't fill your belly. That may be true, but if there's nothin' but belly-fillin' to be looked to, what are we better than pigs?"

"Every word you say is true," exclaimed Rody Flynn, delightedly. "I never knew before you were so like myself. When I have my potatoes in the house, the thought will occur to me that I could buy 'em in the market for less than they cost me. I throw the manure; the cost of labour, the rent, rates, an' taxes into the scale, an' I see my poor potatoes just goin' to kick the beam, till I remember the blossoms. An' the minute I throw in the blossoms with the potatoes down comes the scale again, an' I'm more than satisfied! But I never knew before that you were a man that 'ud think of throwin' the blossoms into the scales."

"Look at this," was the shoemaker's reply, as he stooped down and plucked a solitary primrose from the mound that almost entirely covered the mossy plain. "Look at this," he repeated, holding the stalk between his forefinger and thumb as if he feared to crush it. "If there was nothin' but belly-fillin' an' money-makin' to be looked to in this world, would God Almighty think of makin' *that*?"

"Certainly not," replied Rody Flynn, raising his eyebrows in delighted wonder. "But I never knew before that it was so plain to you. I thought you couldn't see the bright side at all. But can it be so late? Rody Flynn exclaimed, looking round on hearing the little cow begin to low. "There is Julia coming to milk the cow."

"An' Jim Foley, and Joe Cooney, an' that lad o' mine with her," said Davy Lacy. "I'm glad to see him out

in the country. But I suppose he was playin' the concertina for Julia, an' she asked him to come out with her."

"Joe Cooney an' Davy are great friends," returned Rody Flynn; "but I don't think either of 'em pulls well with big Jim."

"He's a terrible boast," said the shoemaker. "I wonder, now, is he really hearty, or only pretendin'?"

Joe Cooney and young Davy Lacy, a pale-faced and very quiet-looking youth, came into the field; but Jim Foley folded his arms and remained upon the road.

"He *has* a drop in," Davy Lacy remarked when they came near enough to judge whether Jim Foley's tipsiness was real or assumed.

"Rody Flynn," said Jim Foley, "just step this way for a moment. I want to have a word with you in private."

"Well, what is it?" Rody asked when they had walked some distance from the gate.

"I just want to know," returned Jim Foley with a portentous scowl, "why you insulted my father this morning?"

"Insulted your father!" the cooper exclaimed in surprise.

"Well, *annoyed* him—set him jeering," returned Jim Foley, "which for all practical purposes means insulting. You said there would be no contest, which was as much as telling my father that the twenty pounds, be the same more or less, which was always given to supply voters and their friends with refreshments on such occasions, would not be forthcoming this time."

"Oh! I wasn't thinkin' of that at all," Rody replied, resuming his good-humoured look, which surprise had for a moment clouded. "I on'y gave it as my opinion that we might have a walk over."

"It was most injudicious on your part," rejoined Jim Foley, becoming a little unsteady on his legs as he tried to assume his favourite attitude with one foot thrust forward. "But my father and mother ballyragged me on account of it."

"Ballyragged *you* because I said there might be no contest!" exclaimed Rody Flynn, surprise again extinguishing the laugh in his chubby face.

"Well," returned Jim Foley, with a beery smile of condescension, "I ought not to blame you for not catching my meaning. A man in your station of life, Rody, could scarcely expect that a man in my position had any serious intentions."

"Oh! I believe I'm coming at what you mean now," said the little cooper, holding his sides and laughing heartily.

"You comprehend me now," continued Jim Foley blandly. "So in future don't say anything to aggravate my father or my mother. Not but that I am my own master," added Jim Foley, resuming his lofty manner; "but for the sake of avoiding domestic bickerings, be cautious."

"All right, Jim," returned Rody Flynn, laughing. "I must run off an' overtake Davy Lacy or he'll think I'm not going home."

"One word more," said Jim Foley. "You see those chaps lying in the field. She invited, and even pressed them to accompany her. That young Lacy is a harmless creature; and as Julia is so fond of music, I have no great objection to him. But I don't like that other fellow—though, say nothing about it, as he's the priest's boy, and the fellow might turn the house-keeper against us. But you ought to make Cooney know his place."

Rody Flynn laughed again, and was hurrying after his friend, the melancholy shoemaker, when he saw Julia, who had thrown off her cloak, and laid the pail upon the field before sitting down to commence milking the little brown cow, running towards him, holding something she held in her hand above her head to attract his attention.

"Oh, aye, the key of the door!" was Rody Flynn's exclamation as Julia handed the key over the fence to him. Julia returned slowly to the side of the little brown cow, tying up her hair as she went on, and when the milk began to spurt into the pail, Jim Foley saw her

head turn round, and walked a few steps to where the hedge was sufficiently low to give her a view of his manly person from the hips, upon which his hands rested gracefully, up to the crown of his picturesque wide-awake. But the violet eyes rested all the time upon the two fields that looked so like an open green book laid against the brown heather, and never saw a sight of Mr. Jim Foley. As for Joe Cooney and young Davy Lacy, lying upon the field on the other side of the fence, they never thought that Julia was looking at them or thinking of them at all.

"Con was not in as good spirits to-day as I expected to see him in," thought Julia, as she went on with her milking; "but his mother was very friendly, and I think she's proud of me. Mave looked really beautiful; she's the handsomest girl comin' into the chapel. Oh! if Charlie comes home; an' if everything comes to pass that I have in my mind! We'll be all so happy. An' poor Joe, I'm sure," she added, while the tears welled into her eyes, "poor Joe will be the happiest of us all."

Davy Lacy preferred leaning over the half-door, and watching the poplar tree, to sitting by the fire of chips which Rody Flynn was fanning into a blaze with the bottom of an old gallon in the kitchen. And Rody himself, after watching the ruddy flame he had, with much patient effort, succeeded in getting up, for a minute or two, carried his chair outside the workshop door, and, sitting down, looked along the village-street, evidently deriving much amusement from every object upon which his merry black eye rested, from Davy Lacy's one-eyed cock to Jacky the cobbler's ankles. Sub-Constable Joe Sproule was making the high heels of his boots sound upon the curb-stones near Terry Hanrahan's corner, possibly flattering himself that his early hopes were not all doomed to disappointment. It was plain that Sub-Constable Sproule had not now the least symptom of "pigs on the brain," for every time he turned at the corner he stood for a whole minute contemplating Larry Foley's swinging-sign with a look of

admiration suggestive of "a joy for ever." Suddenly the drowsy stillness was broken by the sound of a horse's hoofs upon the village street. Mr. Robert O'Keeffe turned Terry Hanrahan's corner, and had pulled up at the priest's gate almost before Joe Sproule had time to say to himself, "that's Mr. O'Keeffe, and he is, no doubt, going up to his uncle's, the parish priest's."

"There must be something in the paper," Rody Flynn remarked a few minutes later. "Here is Mr. Sweeny comin' down from the priest's, an' he never walks that way with his chin stretched out except when there's something in the paper."

But it was not a newspaper, but an immense great placard that the schoolmaster produced from under his coat-tails as he entered the cooper's workshop, the door of which Davy Lacy held open for him. It was the Hon. Horatio O'Mulligan's address to the electors, which Mr. Sweeny held with his open hands against the wall as if to see how it would look when posted up.

"Read it," said Rody Flynn, bringing his chair inside the door, and sitting down facing the green placard.

"Gentlemen, . . . Her Majesty's Ministers . . . Dissolution of Parliament . . . have power . . . all questions . . . at my post . . . and so on," muttered the schoolmaster, drawing his finger down from paragraph to paragraph of the great green poster, a few advanced copies of which Mr. O'Keeffe had brought direct from the printer's.

"'Tis curious how like one another they all are," said Rody Flynn, throwing one well-shaped leg over the other, and stroking the fine angola stocking with his stumpy fingers.

"Davy," said the schoolmaster, as he folded up the placard, "you're a close observer."

"How is that?" the shoemaker asked, with a movement of the shoulders which showed he had forgotten it was Sunday, and that his arms were in the sleeves of his coat.

"The 'black sheep,' as you suspected," returned Mr. Sweeny, "*was* meant for someone in particular. I'm after having a talk with the housekeeper. But it must be kept private for a while for fear it might only encourage others to follow the example of the black sheep."

"Who is it?" Rody Flynn asked.

"Oh, it must be a secret for a while," replied the schoolmaster, laughing; "but you'll hear enough about it before long. There'll be hot work this time," he added; "the Tories are going to make a great fight. Mr. O'Keeffe is in great spirits. He says they never got such a beating as they'll get this time. The Bishop wrote yesterday to every parish in the diocese; but some of the letters were late for the post. Only for that Father Clancy should say something at second Mass. He'd rather not; but he must when he sees the Bishop's letter. Mrs. Slattery is after telling me all about it." And Mr. Sweeny turned away, evidently in high glee after that confab. with the priest's housekeeper, and at the anticipation of the stirring time he saw approaching.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE NOMINATION—A GREAT DAY FOR SHANNACLOUGH—
BOB DEE GETS INTO TROUBLE—MURTY MAGRATH
DOES A LITTLE BUSINESS IN HIS OWN LINE—WHAT
HAPPENED BETWEEN HIM AND SUB-CONSTABLE SPROULE
IN PUDDLE-LANE.

WITH the general merits of the general election this history has little or nothing to do. Notwithstanding Mr. Sweeny's anticipation, it turned out to be a dull business enough in Shannaclough.

Father Feehan had proposed the Hon. Horatio O'Mulligan as a fit and proper person to represent the county in Parliament. Somehow Mr. Robert O'Keeffe had so managed matters that his uncle's influence was regarded, at least by one of the Liberal candidates, as all-powerful. The parish priest of Ballinsoggarth was a mere nobody at the nomination, while Father Feehan was the observed of all observers. He was linked from the courthouse to the hotel by Lord Allavogga, followed by a cheering crowd, mostly composed of enthusiastic females.

"Begor, Shannaclough is a great place!" was Joe Cooney's exclamation as his master ascended the steps to the hotel arm-in-arm with a real live lord. "The man that makes the magistrates an' all!" added Joe Cooney, who had read in the local paper only the evening before that the Lord Chancellor had appointed no less than three gentlemen of the South Riding to the commission of the peace, on the recommendation of Lord

Allavogga. "An' not a wan from the parish to see it," Joe went on, with a disappointed look. "Not a mother's sowl from Shannaclough in town to day but the fellows that's makin' money by the election. I saw Sammy Sloane a while ago in the courthouse; but he's with the landlords. But Murty Magrath is at our side; an' why isn't he here? He'd be able to give a fair description of it all at Rody's to-night or to-morrow mornin'. Sproule, the peeler, 'll have it all to himself. Lord! what a great man he thinks himself. The High Sheriff is as nothin' to Sproule, in his own mind. 'You may come in, Joe,' he says to me so condescendin'. Just as if I couldn't get in in spite of his teeth—an' my own masther making a speech. An' the management of everything in Mr. Robert's hands. Lord, all the talk Sproule 'll have when he goes home; an' all the big words he'll let out. 'Tis a pity Jim Foley isn't a peeler; there'd be a pair of 'em. They're both very fond of showin' off at Rody's. But the divil a care Julia cares about 'em, though they always begin to talk grander when they see her comin'."

Joe, as he thus soliloquised, was standing under the archway that led into the stable yard of the hotel, his eyes wandering over the crowd of upturned faces in the street. "I suppose," he went on, "they're expectin' a speech; but I don't think 'tis Father Feehan's place to talk from a windy. Wan of them young counsellors or attorneys is the right person for windy-speechin'—talking, moreover, to a lot of women."

Joe Cooney moved out upon the pavement sufficiently far to be able to see his master standing in the balcony, with his hat off, and his right arm extended, just about to address the crowd. His momentary silence was the result of a doubt as to the appropriateness of "Fellow-countrymen," with which he was about to begin his speech, on seeing the majority of his audience belonged to the gentler half of the community. The silence at this moment was profound. A woman with a basket of gingerbread near Joe Cooney

whispered to a woman with a basket of oranges that she "never heard such silence."

"He's a lovely man," was the whispered reply. "But why don't he begin?"

Father Feehan was becoming a little confused. Having rejected "fellow-countrymen" as unsuitable, the next phrase that occurred to him wherewith to commence his speech was naturally, "Ladies and gentlemen;" but as the upturned female countenances met his eye he wavered again. The audience, however, were quite fascinated by the honeyed smile and rosy handsome face of the parish priest of Shannaclough. But Joe Cooney was beginning to wonder what could be the cause of this slowness and hesitation, so unusual with his master, when the stillness was broken by a fearfully discordant groan from the middle of the crowd. The two basket-women "went for" the delinquent immediately, and all was commotion and confusion in an instant. "A spy," "An Orangeman," "Let me at him," and similar cries were heard all around, while female arms and fists were seen waving in the air, mingled in wild confusion. Joe Cooney had just time to observe that the object of attack seemed to be a broad-brimmed black hat, when a well-aimed blow upon the crown crushed it over the face of the wearer, who struggled in vain to push it up again, so as that he might at least be able to see his assailants. Failing in his efforts to push the hat up from over his eyes, he tried frantically to tear it down and drive his head through the crown, as if he were suffocating. All this time fists were coming down like drumsticks upon the broad-brimmed black hat, while shrill cries of vengeance filled the air.

Joe Cooney was beginning to feel alarmed, when he observed a figure that he at once recognised pushing through the crowd of excited women, the long thin arms and hands stretched out and a wild look of anxiety in the large brown eyes.

It was poor George Pensonby, whose hare-skin cap

and flowing black beard seemed to be familiar to the crowd, who allowed him to make his way to the distressed owner of the broad-brimmed hat.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Ponsonby, breathlessly, "don't ye see he belongs to our side?"

"Didn't he groan the priest?" shouted the two basket-women.

"Groaned the priest!" returned Ponsonby. "If he did it was because he doesn't know groaning from cheering. That poor innocent fellow is good for nothing but telling lies and stealing chips in the frost, and smoking tobacco."

This pathetic address filled the two basket-women with remorse. They flew to the rescue now as readily as they had led the attack. Pressing their hands round the broad-brimmed hat, they succeeded after much pushing and turning and coaxing, in getting it above the wearer's eyebrows; and Joe Cooney could not repress a laugh when he beheld Bob Dee's long yellow face revealed to the crowd, upon which it stared in vacant and open-mouthed wonder.

"Don't ye see," said Ponsonby, reproachfully, "that 'tis a priest's hat, and his coat is a priest's sartout."

"God 'lmighty forgive us," exclaimed the gingerbread woman, devoutly turning up her eyes and making the sign of the cross; "we had a right to look before us. 'Twas well we hadn't him spiled before you came up. But, thanks be to God, he's only in a doldrum."

"Here," said her companion, whose repentance took a practical turn, "ate that." And she held an orange close under Bob Dee's nose, the gift being received with such a grin of delight, as Ponsonby thought nothing less than a half-ounce of tobacco could have lit up in his foster-brother's expressionless countenance.

"'Twas that terrible groan that set us astray," pleaded the gingerbread woman.

"But he thinks that's cheering," returned Ponsonby,

running his eyes along the skylights of the houses on the opposite side of the street. "A cheer, Bob, for Father Feehan."

The same dreadful bellow was repeated that had created such a sensation a few minutes before, and was responded to by a loud burst of good-humoured laughter, in the midst of which Father Feehan thought it as well that he should make his bow and retire from the balcony.

Murty Magrath, who stood at the door of the public-house opposite the hotel, moving his finger round and round between his long neck and the high white cravat was an amused spectator of the scene just described. The sheriff's officer had walked into the publichouse half-an-hour before, and called for a half-glass of whiskey at the counter.

"You'll charge me twopence for that," said Murty Magrath when the liquor had been filled out.

"Yes," the proprietor of the publichouse replied. "Threepence halfpenny a glass."

"So if I took two of them it would be only threepence halfpenny?" said Murty Magrath, making room for his windpipe.

"That's all," replied the publican, with a smile.

"Fill out another," said Murty Magrath.

The second half-glass was filled out.

"This one is twopence?" said Murty Magrath, pointing to the half-glass that was filled first.

"Twopence," was the reply, in a quick, business-like tone.

"And this one is three-halfpence?" said Murty Magrath, pointing to the second half-glass.

"Yes," replied the publican, with an assenting bow, and resting his two hands on the counter; "three-halfpence."

"I'll take this one," said Murty Magrath, emptying the glass and replacing it on the counter. With an imperturbable look of gravity the sheriff's officer then thrust his hand into one of the pockets of his

whitish corduroy smallclothes, and took out a penny-piece and a half-penny, and laid them beside the empty glass.

The publican was confounded, and seemed not to know what to do; but remembering that there were three policemen in a room behind the shop, one of whom had been speaking to the tall man with the white cravat in the street a little while before, he hurried into the room, and touching the policeman on the shoulder asked, "Who is that man?"

The policeman—who was no other than our friend Sub-Constable Joe Sproule—looked in the direction indicated by the publican's outstretched arm, and answered, "That's Murty Magrath, the cleverest man I ever met. An' my experience of men is by no means limited, I can assure you," added Joe Sproule, consequentially.

"Where is he from, and what is he?" the publican asked.

"He's a bailiff, an' hails from Shannaclough—a very quiet, decent little place," Joe Sproule replied. "I'm stationed there now goin' on twelve months, and haven't a word to say against it. Though my first visit to the place was made under very unfavourable auspices," added the sub-constable, grandly.

"A bailiff!" exclaimed the publican, as if struck by some sudden thought. "I have a decree for thirteen pounds eleven and ninepence against a fellow in the town—a bailiff himself—and I can get no one to execute it for love or money."

"How is that?" Joe Sproule asked.

"'Tis against his body," the publican replied; "and he's such a dangerous man not one of the bailiffs would have the courage to nab him."

"Maybe that's the man with the iron hand," Acting-constable Finucane said. "He was pointed out to me to-day. He certainly looks like an ugly customer."

"They're all afraid of the iron hand," returned the

publican. "They think he'd run it through their body if a hand was laid on him. I offered one man three pounds over and above his legal fee to lodge the fellow in the Marshalsea, but he'd be afraid. And what makes it worse is, the rascal is well able to pay. The minute he'd be in I'd have my money."

"The devil himself won't get him in if Murty Magrath can't do it," said Joe Sproule. "Finucane and me have reason to know that."

"Do you think so?" the publican asked.

"Do I think I have this glass in my hand," returned Joe Sproule. "I'd simply take my book oath of it."

"There he is," said the publican, "knocking with the iron hand upon my own counter, and not afraid or ashamed."

The three policemen rose from their seats and gazed through the door at the iron-handed bailiff as if they were examining a dangerous wild animal through the bars of his cage.

"Good God!" exclaimed Joe Sproule; "it is really an iron hand. I thought it was only figurative."

"Part of his arm was amputated," returned the publican. "'Tis very useful to him; as he has a fork in it, and a way for catching hold of things. But when he's half-drunk and raps it against a door or a table, and threatens to drive it through and through you, the most courageous man would run from him."

"Well, if he had as many iron hands as Cerberus," returned Joe Sproule, who evidently confounded heads with hands, "Murty Magrath can come round him. He is capable of anything. He'd solve the mystery of the Man in the Iron Mask if he only tried."

The publican hurried out, and seeing Murty Magrath standing on the flagway not far from the shop door, managed to attract his attention, and made a sign to him to come in again.

"Did you see that man that passed out just now?" the publican asked.

"Yes; I know him," returned Murty Magrath.

"Walk this way for a minute," said the publican, opening a door on one side of the shop.

Ten minutes after Murty Magrath was standing again on the flagway an amused spectator of the scene of which Bob Dee, greatly to his own astonishment, was the central figure. A rumour having suddenly spread among the crowd in front of the hotel that a favourite local orator was holding forth from one of the windows of the popular candidate's committee-room at the other end of the town, Bob Dee unexpectedly found himself quite alone in the middle of the deserted street. He put up his hand and felt the bulges in his hat, as if to assure himself that the first impression was not an unpleasant dream.

"Step this way, Bob," said Murty Magrath, passing him by without looking towards him; "I have something for you in my pocket."

"What is it?" Bob Dee asked with a grin, when he had come up with the bailiff under the archway leading to the hotel stableyard.

"That's a fine orange you have," said Murty Magrath; "but I have something better here in the tail of my coat."

Bob Dee held up the orange, and, turning it round and round between his finger and thumb, seemed to regard it with infinite wonder.

"Put it in your pocket and bring it home to your mother like a dutiful son," said Murty Magrath. "And just look at this," he added, taking some two ounces of pigtail from his coat-pocket and slowly uncoiling it.

"Give me a bit," exclaimed Bob Dee, excitedly. "The devil a smoke I got to-day. Look," he continued taking a blackened "dudheen" from the breast pocket of his clerical overcoat and thrusting his little finger into the empty bowl, "there's not a souleen in 'id. The last smook I had was brown paper. Give me wan poip-full."

"I'll give you the whole of it," returned Murty Magrath, "if you do what I tell you."

"Begob, I will," was the eager answer.

"All you have to do," returned the bailiff, "is to go to the upper end of this street and stand near the pump till I come to you again. Do that, and keep your stick firm in your hand just as if you were goin' to hit a fellow, and this fine piece of tobacco is yours."

"Faith, an' I will so," returned Bob Dee. "Am I to hit any wan?"

"I think not," returned Murty Magrath. "But don't be frightened if anything happens, for I want to have a bit of fun with a quare fellow that lives in this town."

"An' thin I'll get the tibacky," Bob Dee asked, delightedly.

"No mistake about it," was the reply.

"Begob, I'll never stop smookin' on the road all the way to Knockgrana," exclaimed Bob Dee, his eyes absolutely rolling in his head at the thought of such superhuman felicity, as he hurried away to the pump.

Murty Magrath put his hands under his coat tails, and strolled carelessly down to where the crowd had assembled opposite the committee room. Seeing the man he wanted on the outskirts of the meeting, he approached and tapped him lightly on the shoulder.

"How are you, Magrath?" said the man gruffly, having turned quickly round on feeling the light touch upon his shoulder, as if he expected to confront an enemy.

"I came here to-day," returned Murty Magrath, meekly, "to do a little business. I knew I'd never get the chance again; but he's such a dangerous divil, I haven't the courage to lay a hand on him, though he's standing by himself in a mighty convenient place, up near the Marshalsea, just now."

"An' you want me to do the job for you?" the other asked. "But if so, it must be on the usual terms."

"Certainly," Murty Magrath answered; "I'll give you two half-crowns. But I am greatly afraid of the fellow. He's as strong as a bull, and as savage as a bull-dog. You won't blame me if you get hurt?" Murty asked, anxiously.

"Bah!" exclaimed the iron-handed bailiff, who was more or less in liquor. "Just show the fellow to me, and let *me* do the rest."

"Very well," returned Murty Magrath, "let us go round by Puddle-lane, so as that he can't see us till we get close to him. Of course I'll take my share of the danger," he added, drawing a long tremulous breath. "I'm a man of principle in the way of my profession, but I do confess to a sinking of the heart when I fancy myself face to face with him. You'll be into him first, an' then I'll be at your back. But don't say that I haven't given you fair warning if anything happens."

"Come along!" was the reply, in a savage growl. "Ye're all a chicken-hearted set of fellows over there. I met that little Sloane to-day, an' he's not fit for nothin', Murty."

"There he is," whispered Murty Magrath, on reaching the end of Puddle-lane. "Just keep in the shade of the corner of the house here till we arrange the mode of attack, and screw our courage to the sticking point."

"Is there a point to his stick?" the iron-handed bailiff asked, showing some signs of caution, if not of fear. "I don't like sharp instruments at all. Firearms or anything sharp is very unpleasant. Is id a steel pint you talk of?"

"No," returned Murty; "I merely used a quotation from Shakespeare."

"Just tell me what you mane," said the other with a scowl. "You talk iv a sticking pint an' a spear. Just say has the fellow a sharp waypon or not?"

"He has nothing but that ash wattle," replied Murty Magrath.

"Is id that fellow wid the long wrapper, suckin' the orange?" was the next question.

"That's him," Murty Magrath replied. "But don't be rash; steal on him, an' have him grabbed before he sees you."

Poor Bob Dee was grasped by the collar from behind, and, turning round his head, recoiled in real terror from the ferocious scowl of the beetle-browed bailiff, from whose grasp he struggled in vain to escape.

"Come along," growled his captor. "No use in stickin' pints wud me, my buck; or in shakin' spears aither. Come along!"

Poor Bob was chucked and dragged across the street to the entrance to the debtors' prison before he had time to collect his wits, such as they were. He cast another frightened look over his shoulder while the bolts of the prison door were being drawn back with a great noise that redoubled his terror, when, to his infinite joy he caught a glimpse of Murty Magrath, with one eye shut, and dangling the pieces of pigtail, as if he were holding it up to tempt a dog to jump at it. Then Bob Dee remembered the compact between him and Murty Magrath, and had no doubt but that this was "the piece of fun" which Murty spoke of. The ponderous door creaked upon its hinges, and four officials in uniform appeared upon the scene looking fussy, if not frightened, as if they had been surprised while engaged in some unlawful doings. The iron-handed bailiff passed in with his prisoner, followed by Murty Magrath.

The officers observed with evident surprise a broad grin upon the face of the prisoner, who seemed to regard the whole thing as a delightful joke. At this moment a wild looking figure sprang through the doorway, exclaiming breathlessly—

"Didn't I tell you to stay with me and I'd keep you out of harm's way? But, no," the speaker continued, pulling off his hare-skin cap and drawing the sleeve of his tattered green coat across his forehead, which was quite wet with perspiration—"but no, he was always a fool; always a born natural. Couldn't snare

a rabbit or track a hare even in the snow. While ago he was mobbed by the women in mistake for an Orangeman. And here he is now in jail in mistake for somebody else—unless he's after stealing something. You might bet on Bob for stealing and telling lies."

During this speech Ponsonby's dark eyes continued to wander round the enclosure within which the party were standing—the four officers and the iron-handed bailiff staring at him in amazement, while Bob Dee grinned from ear to ear—and Murty Magrath quietly took the decree given him by the publican, and thrust his finger inside his cravat. Murty whispered a few words in the ear of the principal officer, who was seen to nod his head and make a motion with his hand, as if the mystery was cleared up quite to his satisfaction.

"Where's the decree?" the iron-handed bailiff asked, "an' thim two half-crowns?"

"Here's the money," returned Murty Magrath, presenting him with two half-crowns; "an' here's the decree," he added, playfully laying the document upon the iron-handed bailiff's shoulder, and then handing it to the principal prison officer.

"Come, my fine fellow," said that official, turning to George Ponsonby, "take your friend away with you out of this; and I hope you'll be able to keep him out of harm's way for the rest of the evening."

"Won't I get the tibacky?" Bob Dee asked, looking somewhat blank. "Or is the piece of fun over yet?" he added, turning to Murty Magrath.

"The fun is over," Murty replied, "and here is the tobacco."

Bob Dee clutched eagerly at the coveted prize, and hurried into the street, followed by Ponsonby, whose voluble good counsel fell upon inattentive ears, for Bob's whole soul was in the pigtail, of which he had a pipeful cut with his teeth before they had got three yards from the prison.

"Good evening, Wat," said Murty Magrath, meekly.

"Is id afther lettin' the prisoner go ye are?" the

iron-handed bailiff asked, looking utterly bewildered, and with a vague misgiving that "someone had blundered."

"'Tis all right," returned the principal officer. "You are the prisoner."

"Me, the prisoner!" growled the iron-handed bailiff with a surly scowl. But observing the covert smile in the face of the officer as he glanced in a business-like way over the decree, the scowl gave place to an expression of stupefied dismay.

"Magrath," he muttered, after a minute's brooding, with his head hanging down like a sulky schoolboy, "you got at the blind side uv me. I see what an ass I'm afther makin' uv myself, but I exceeded my reg'lar allowance be five half wans to-day, in regard uv the election. On'y for that you couldn't make an ass av me so aisy."

"Then," replied Murty Magrath, who, with his customary prudence, had taken up a position behind the two stoutest officers, "in that case you have reason to be thankful to me, for it will be a caution to you all the days of your life not to exceed your allowance. 'When the wine—or, *a fortiori*, the hardware—is in the wit is out,' as the proverb says."

"Just tell me, Magrath," said the iron-handed bailiff, who seemed to be mentally reviewing the events of the day, "had you Sloane in the job wud you? He thrated me three times runnin' to-day."

"Do you think I'd demean myself by voluntarily coolising with that pot-bellied Saxon?" returned Murty Magrath, in what seemed to be real indignation. "No, Wat, I did it all single-handed. You see 'tisin't every day we get the chance of earning three Nationals by a civil-biller. So as you're an *off-handed* fellow, I expect you'll bear no ill-will. This is election time you know, an' all is fair in love, war, and electioneering, as the proverb says."

"Well," returned the other, in sulky resignation to the inevitable, "will you tell my wife where I am, an' desire her to go to Lord Allavogga, an' he'll pay the

debt, an' get me out uv this before the polling at any rate. You know I'm on the Liberal side this turn."

"Certainly I will," returned Murty Magrath, in quite an animated way, "with all the pleasure in life. And if you wish I'll talk to the Hon. Horrish myself."

"If you do," returned the iron-handed bailiff, brightening up considerably, "an' get me out this evenin', be cripes we'll dhrink these two half-crowns you gave for runnin' myself in afore we go to bed."

"All right," returned Murty Magrath, as with one hand under his coat-tails and the forefinger of the other making room for his windpipe in the high white cravat, he moved leisurely towards the door; "I always knew you were an off-handed fellow, Wat. So good evening for the present."

The editor of the *Loyalist* was just jotting down the words, "As we go to press the town is comparatively quiet," when Joe Sproule and his friend, the military looking acting-constable, adjourned for the second time to the public-house opposite the hotel to have a drop for the road. The astonished and delighted publican was in the act of handing Murty Magrath three brand new one-pound notes fresh from the bank.

"I knew the fellow could have it paid if he liked," said the publican. "I'm just after getting the money; so here is your three pounds. You were right," he added, turning to Sub-Constable Joe Sproule. "He lodged the fellow in jail, and I have been already paid my money."

"Ah," returned Joe Sproule, "I have had peculiar facilities in becoming acquainted with Mr. Magrath's capabilities, and so had my friend Finucane."

"A readin' man," said Murty Magrath to the publican, with a motion of the thumb towards Joe Sproule. "A man of literary acquirements. This is an unexpected windfall to me," he went on, with his eyes seemingly fixed upon the three crisp bank notes. "With this and what I can spare from my election fees I think I'll be able to send my daughter to America."

Joe Sproule started, and laid his glass upon the counter, having taken it untasted from his lips. And after a minute's deep pondering Sub-Constable Sproule swallowed his liquor at a single gulp, and rushing out of the door, to his comrade's great astonishment, overtook Murty Magrath at the corner of the street.

"To prevent accidents," said Joe Sproule, tapping the sheriff's officer on the shoulder, "just step this way for a moment."

"What is it?" Murty Magrath asked, when they had moved a little way up a retired lane.

"You say you'll send Fanny to America?" Joe Sproule asked, taking breath after his hasty draught and short race.

"I must have given audible utterance to my thoughts," returned Murty Magrath, looking innocently surprised. "But why do you ask?"

"I'll put the whole question in a nutshell for you," was the reply. "I'll apply for leave to marry this very week, if I am permitted to use the name of Fanny Magrath as one of the parties most intimately concerned in the transaction."

"What does she say herself?" Miss Fanny's father asked.

"Do you think I'd venture to meddle with *your* domestic arrangements?" said Joe Sproule solemnly, "without first havin' your consent and permission? Not likely!"

"Do you propose to marry my daughter?" Murty Magrath asked.

"That's about the correct construction of the intent and meaning of my words," returned the sub-constable. "I'm alive to the gravity of my position. I have weighed the *pros* and *cons*. An' though I could have wished for a more suitable opportunity than the present to disclose my intentions, and a more congenial atmosphere than the unclassical and unsavoury region of Puddle-lane—still, as I said—to prevent accidents, lest possibly I may be kept knocking about during this election, and

Fanny might be *non est* when wanted, I hereby offer myself as a candidate for the honour of representing you in the capacity of son-in-law."

"I heard," returned Murty Magrath, dubiously "that you were looking elsewhere."

"I don't deny it," replied Joe Sproule. "But Miss Flynn declined—very respectfully I must say—to receive my addresses. But that was six weeks ago. And though for the first half of that period I suffered great mental unrest, I am now, praised be that Providence that tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, comparatively restored to my normal equanimity and imperturbability of spirits," added Joe with a hiccup, and in rather a husky voice. "Fanny Magrath is an agreeable girl, an', I fancy, capable of appreciating merit. I don't want to conceal that the advantages likely to accrue from havin' you as a father-in-law present themselves to my imagination in very brilliant colours and forcible terms. In fact, if I had you to fortify me with your advice upon critical occasions, I see no reason why I shouldn't rise to be a Head like my mother's first cousin, that first induced my father to let me join, tellin' her I'd have a gentleman's life. A prognostication," added Joe Sproule, gloomily, "which I grieve to say has not up to the present been realised, even in a very limited degree."

"Well, I agree," said Murty Magrath; "but mind you, I'm not a man to be trifled with. I hope we'll get on very well together, and be of mutual assistance to each other. But let me give you one piece of advice for the present—Don't touch another drop of intoxicatin' drink this evenin', or you'll find your chances of becomin' a head-constable considerably diminished."

And Murty Magrath retraced his steps to the Main street with his hands under his coat-tails, leaving Sub-Constable Joe Sproule to ponder over the important step he had taken in that gloomy and, to use his own expression, "unsavoury" by-street that rejoiced in the name of Puddle-lane.

CHAPTER XXV.

SHANNACLOUGH IN THE SHADE—THE DENUNCIATION OF THE BLACK SHEEP, AND ITS EFFECT UPON ALICE—MR. O'KEEFFE IS RESOLVED TO WIN—AN UNFINISHED PORTRAIT.

BUT if Shannacloough had its triumph at the nomination of candidates, Ballinsoggarth's turn came on the day of polling. Father Feehan felt bitterly mortified when the parish priest of Ballinsoggarth, leading on a long array of voters, arrived at the polling place and announced, in the hearing of Lord Allavogga, that only five votes from his parish would be polled that day against Brummagem and O'Mulligan. Immediately after, Mr. Percy Perrington and Bill Keerawan had marched over a score of Father Feehan's parishioners, under their pastor's very nose, to vote for "the hereditary enemies of their creed and country."

'Twas dreadfully annoying. Lord Allavogga looked into Mr. Robert O'Keeffe's face as if he expected some explanation of this extraordinary state of things; for his lordship had been under the impression that his son's success mainly depended upon the advocacy and support of Mr. Robert O'Keeffe's uncle.

It was observed that Mr. O'Keeffe turned pale and trembled; while Father Feehan looked flushed and mortified. The one thought of the stipendiary magistrateship, the other of the humiliation of being thrown into the shade by the P.P. of Ballinsoggarth. How much of this humiliation was due to Ned Cormack?

Rody Flynn remarked that morning to his friend, Davy Lacy, that "poor Martin Dwyer was the only one of Perrington's tenants who 'went the right way.'" There was very little groaning or booing for all that for "the black sheep." Mr. Perrington's voters were allowed to pass through the village unassailed by voice or missile, with the solitary exception of a screeching execration from Nell the Cobbler, who hurried in to Rody Flynn immediately after the performance, declaring with a frightened look that she feared "her throat was sprained." For this undemonstrative behaviour on the part of the inhabitants of Shannaclough, Mr. Perrington's tenantry in all probability had to thank Ned Cormack. Had not Jack Meehan, the tailor, and his three sons to remain up till clear daylight that morning to finish that new suit of clothes for Mr. Cormack, which, when he jumped off the car and ran into the blacksmith's to request him to have the wheels of the two new carts bound before Saturday, every one so much admired? And the shoes worn by Mrs. Cormack were left at Rockview house the evening before by young Davy Lacy, who returned home with the "Aurora Waltz" in his head, which Mrs. Cormack had played for him, and which he hoped to have so far mastered before Sunday on the concertina as to be able to teach it to Julia Flynn, who was making great progress under his tuition. Then there was the two big cools, and the fifteen new tubs piled up in Rody Flynn's workshop, ready to be sent home in the two new carts which were standing, freshly painted, against the front of the carpenter's house. Is it to be wondered at, then, that the performance in the groaning line on the occasion consisted of a solo by the cobbler's wife?

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"You'd pity poor Alice," Tom Dwyer remarked to Mr. Armstrong. "And her mother feels it too; but she has such command over herself you would hardly notice it."

"'Tis very unpleasant, Tom," returned Mr. Armstrong, with a sigh. "It is hard to say on which side the most unhappiness will be. But I am more concerned for your poor father than for anybody else."

"'Tis a hard case," the young man replied, turning pale; "but I wish it was all over. I believe the blow must fall; and the longer it is delayed the poorer we'll be. I told my father to prepare at once, and not to wait for the course of the law. Others are putting him up to offer every resistance he can, as no one would venture to take the place, even after we were ejected. But I fear nothing but misery could come of that. Don't you think I'm right, sir?" he asked abruptly, turning round and looking into Mr. Armstrong's face.

"Yes, Tom, I think you are right," Ambrose Armstrong replied, in a tone so low as scarcely to be audible.

They were sitting in the summer-house in Mr. Armstrong's garden, at the foot of the poplar tree, which had such a mysterious attraction for Rody Flynn's friend and enemy, the melancholy shoemaker.

"What a quiet life yours was, sir," Tom Dwyer remarked, looking at the old red-tiled house.

"Yes, Tom," was the reply, in the same subdued tone as before. "I always wished for peace and quietness. I was contented, but now I feel very discontented, Tom."

Tom Dwyer looked at him in surprise.

"What *good* have I done?" Mr. Armstrong continued, after a pause. "What return have I made for all the kindnesses I have received? I am helpless, Tom," he added, looking so utterly crushed and heart-broken that Tom Dwyer asked, with a start of surprise—

"Has anything gone wrong with you, sir? I thought you had all you wanted or cared for?"

"I thought so, too," was the reply; "but I was mistaken."

"I am very sorry to hear that," said Tom Dwyer, in great concern. "Since I have made up my mind to go away I often thought I'd look back to the old place

when far away, and that it would be a pleasure to think of you contented and happy as you always were, going to the river to fish, and taking a look at the old house and the orchard from Corringlea bridge, and thinking of old times and the exiles far away that were always glad to see your face and to welcome you."

Ambrose Armstrong pressed his slender white hand over his eyes, and Tom Dwyer was greatly moved when he saw the tears stealing down the old man's cheeks from under the trembling fingers.

"Oh, Tom," he remarked after a silence of some minutes, "that's just what I can't bear to think of."

"I was afraid, sir," returned Tom Dwyer, "that it was something that had gone wrong about your little income."

"No, Tom," was the reply, "my pittance is sufficient for my wants, little as it is. My mother and aunt had a rent-charge for ever of two hundred a year upon one of the best estates in the county. This is equally divided between me and my cousin, Dora, my aunt's daughter—the whole to fall to the survivor. But we are wearing each other out," he added, with a smile. "Poor Dora disliked this place, and was fond of crowds. Yet in her last letter she tells me that she has a great longing to come home, and warns me, if she should die before me, to have her buried near her mother. I wish the poor thing would come home and end her days in peace and quietness. Poor old Gillen remembers her; they were girls together running about this garden. So I'd expect we'd all get on very well."

"But don't give up the river, sir," said Tom, with a smile. "Many a talk you and Mrs. Cormack will have when I'm far away, and I hope I won't be altogether forgotten. 'Tis strange," he continued, "how discontented I was these last two or three years. Before that I was as happy as a king, and never would wish for a change. I think seeing you always so happy, sir, had a great influence on me, and kept me from wishing for a change. But I was very restless for the past

couple of years, and thought I could never remain as I was at all. And now that I must go, the old desire to spend my life in the place where I was born is as strong as ever. I sometimes think I deserved to be punished for not being thankful enough for God's goodness."

It is scarcely necessary to say that Alice Cormack was the unconscious cause of Tom Dwyer's discontent. It was perfectly hopeless for him to think of her ever becoming his wife. He'd never tell his love; but go and seek his fortune in a foreign land. Yet the hope was always in his heart that he might one day sing for Alice Cormack—

"I sought again my native land,
Thy father welcomed me, love;
I poured my gold into his hand,
And my guerdon found in thee, love!

"So, gillimachree, sit down by me,
We now are join'd and ne'er shall sever;
This hearth's our own, our hearts are one,
And peace is ours for ever."

"What way do Nannie and Nellie feel?" Mr. Armstrong asked, going to the entrance of the summer-house, so as to be able to see to the foot of the mountain.

"Nannie is heart-broken," Tom replied; "but you'd think by Nellie she does not understand it. And neither does my mother. She thinks Father Feehan will do something wonderful for us, he gave my father such praise. And you'd think she was made a queen, she was so glad of the cutting up he gave the Cormacks. But I'm really afraid," Tom added sadly, "that poor Alice will never be the same after it. I think Father Feehan himself must be sorry."

The result of the election was a foregone conclusion. Nobody doubted for a moment that the Tories would

be beaten by a "sweeping majority." But the parish priest of Shannaclough was not the less wroth for all that.

The "black sheep" were even more wretched than the unhappy tenants-at-will who ventured to disobey the landlord's ukase. Many of them shrank from meeting their neighbours, and stole away in the early morning on the following Sunday to hear Mass in another parish, or remained at home on the plea of illness. There was quite an epidemic of "terrible headaches" and "pains in the back" that Sunday morning in the parish of Shannaclough, and particularly in that portion of it, of which Mr. Percy Perrington was lord and master. But those of the "black sheep" who had the courage to show their faces among their fellow-parishioners were agreeably surprised to find that popular indignation in their regard was tempered with a good deal of popular sympathy.

The rumour had gone abroad that poor Martin Dwyer, of Corringlea, was doomed—that he had already "got notice"—and a feeling pretty generally prevailed that, after all, it was hard to blame a tenant-at-will for refusing to incur the displeasure of his landlord. Father Feehan, however, was not in the mood to take this charitable view of the case. He flayed the poor "black sheep" alive in his address from the altar. There were many burning cheeks and sore hearts under the roof of Shannaclough chapel that bright summer Sabbath morning. Tom Dwyer could not help turning his eyes in the direction of Ned Cormack's pew. Ned Cormack himself was not at Mass that day; but his wife and daughters occupied their usual places in the pew—which was not a front pew like Martin Dwyer's. "For what were the Cormacks," as Mrs. Dwyer used to say, "when that old chapel was first built?" Tom saw Mrs. Cormack raise her veil with a steady hand, and look calmly and apparently unmoved towards the altar. In Margaret's beautiful face there was something like scornful defiance. But Alice! The moment Tom Dwyer's eyes rested upon Alice's face, the tears welled

into them. He turned his head quickly away, and pretended to stoop down to pick up his pocket handkerchief, lest his emotion should be observed.

A sound, as if someone had fallen heavily upon the floor behind him, caused him to look round, and spring to his feet; and in another instant Tom Dwyer was rushing from the chapel, with Alice Cormack, apparently lifeless, in his arms. They were followed by Nannie and Nellie in an agony of grief and terror; for the children thought that Alice was really dead. But Mrs. Cormack and Margaret showed wonderful presence of mind and command over themselves, as with quick, but steady steps, they left the gallery.

The people in the body of the chapel knew nothing of what had happened in the gallery. But Davy Lacy remarked that Father Feehan had stopped speaking "very unexpectedly," and like as if what he had to say suddenly "left his mind."

* * * * *

"Get your hats," said Tom Dwyer to his little twin-sisters in the evening, "and I'll go over to see Alice with ye."

"Mind not to stay too long, an' lave me here by myself," said their mother, wailingly, as the children returned to the kitchen tying on their hats; "and I so nervous."

"Sure my father is in the parlour," returned Tom. "I think the two of ye ought to go out for a walk."

"'Tis little trouble walking is giving me," said Mrs. Dwyer, who was sitting on a low stool by the fire. "Ye can go walks, and pay visits, and amuse yourselves——."

Mrs. Dwyer stopped suddenly on seeing Nannie clasp her tiny little hands together, and turn her blue eyes upwards with a look of intense pain. The poor child's eyes were red with crying. She was already enduring all the bitter anguish of leaving the dear old home for ever, and even Mrs. Dwyer felt a sense of shame at her own selfishness.

"Well," she went on, changing her tone, "sure 'tis

right for ye to go over and see poor Alice ; an' they all so kind to us ; an' your father thinkin' that the best thing for him to do is to make a bargain with Ned Cormack about the good-will. Though," she added mysteriously and through her clenched teeth, "Molly Manogue told me 'twould be easy enough to get anyone settled that would dare to meddle with *my* farm."

"Don't let anyone hear you talk such nonsense," said Tom in a tone that seemed to frighten the good woman, for she started and cowered over the fire, though the evening was soft and sunny.

"The Cormacks got it to-day, Cauth," said Mrs. Dwyer, when the coast was clear ; and her face lit up with a look of triumphant delight.

"Begor they did, ma'am," returned Cauth, who was sitting in the threshold of the door, chewing a straw, and calmly observing the efforts of a red bull-calf to choke himself with an old apron of his mistress's that happened to be hanging out of the dairy window.

"What good is their money ?" continued Mrs. Dwyer, contemptuously. "I wouldn't be like 'em for all the wealth of Damer."

"Faith, an 'tis thrue for you, ma'am," returned Cauth, not quite comprehending what had been said, so absorbed was she in the proceedings of the bull-calf, who, finding the swallowing of the whole apron impracticable, was now convulsively endeavouring to disgorge the moiety he had succeeded in getting into his gullet. "O—o—oh !" shouted Cauth, giving vent to one of her customary yells.

"What is it, Cauth ?" her mistress asked, calmly.

"The calf that's after gettin' a tumble, ma'am," Cauth replied, ejecting the masticated portion of the straw, and biting off a fresh bit. "He's lyin' on his side an' kicking' away like fun."

Fortunately Martin Dwyer looked through the parlour window, and by jumping over Cauth's legs, and running across the yard, he was just in time to save the bull-calf from suffocation by pulling the apron out of his throat.

* * * * *

"Come, Eddy," said Ned Cormack, "you and I and Tom Dwyer will take a drive over to Knockgrana."

He was very glad to see Tom Dwyer in his house that evening, and took the opportunity of letting people see him and Tom Dwyer taking a drive together.

Alice was reclining upon a lounge, with Nellie and Nannie standing one on either side of her.

"I was very foolish," said Alice, smiling, as she took a hand of each in hers and clapped them together. "But I'll be quite well to-morrow."

But Alice was not well the next nor the next day; and on the third day the doctor was sent for.

One day early in the following week Mr. Robert O'Keeffe was sitting with his uncle in the priest's parlour, when, somewhat to their surprise, a man of Mr. Cormack's rode up to the hall-door and gave a loud double knock. In a minute or two the man rode away again.

Both gentlemen glanced towards the door, expecting that somebody would open it and deliver a note or a message, or give some explanation of the circumstance just mentioned. The door was not opened, however, and both the priest and his nephew turned rather quickly to the table and had recourse to the spoons in their tumblers, as if each wished to conceal from the other that so ordinary an event as a servant on horseback riding up to the door had awakened his curiosity. The priest remembered that Mrs. Slattery had gone to visit a friend of hers in the village, and made up his mind to remain in ignorance of the why and wherefore of Ned Cormack's sending his servant to the house till her return. But when Mr. O'Keeffe saw Father Clancy mount his grey mare opposite the window and ride down the shady avenue at a rather lively pace for the curate, he could not resist throwing up the window and asking Joe Cooney, who had led round the grey mare, what the matter was.

"Miss Alice Cormack, sir," Joe replied, "that has the faver."

And Joe Cooney then turned quickly upon his heel

and walked back to the stable, with his eyes fixed upon the ground. He was sorry to hear of Miss Alice Cormack's illness, and sorry to see that Mr. O'Keeffe was not sorry. Honest Joe felt that he had made a mistake in his manner of replying to Mr. O'Keeffe's question ; it is disappointing to find only indifference when one expects sympathy.

Mr. O'Keeffe, when Joe Cooney told him that Alice Cormack had fever, evinced no concern whatever, either by word or look. Stroking his thin, light-coloured whisker with his dainty fingers, he took a rapid glance at his whole course of love, and what had and what yet might possibly come of it. He certainly had not played his cards unskilfully ; yet, so far, the game had gone against him. His expectations were entirely realised so far as the young lady herself was concerned ; but the young lady's father had proved a far harder nut to crack than Mr. Robert O'Keeffe anticipated. During the whole summer and autumn, after that evening in the drawingroom of Rockview House, when Margaret answered " Yes " to all his questions, Mr. O'Keeffe was seen very often in company with Ned Cormack's beautiful daughter. He followed her to the sea-side, and it was known throughout the parish that Miss Cormack was constantly seen walking with Mr. O'Keeffe upon the beach, and leaning upon his arm ; and, according to the code that regulated such matters in Shannaclough, the arm-in-arm proceeding meant either " some understanding " or impropriety. And of the latter, no one would dream of suspecting the beautiful and accomplished Miss Cormack of Rockview House. Mrs. Cormack, however, thought it wise to keep her eyes open. You remember how she hurried away from the Orchard on Lady Day without waiting for Molly Hanrahan's song, when she saw Mr. O'Keeffe riding up the avenue.

But Ned Cormack was inexorable. The baffled suitor then suddenly changed his tactics, and without absolutely breaking off the engagement, almost altogether discontinued his visits to Rockview.

Even Father Feehan thought that the matrimonial

project was abandoned when he found his nephew quite approving of his intention to hit Ned Cormack hard for voting with the landlord and making his parish "the laughing stock of the whole county." But the young gentleman knew what he was about. He'd offer his services as mediator, make his uncle forget and forgive, and this he hoped would prove no small inducement to Ned Cormack to come to terms with him. Tom Dwyer's carrying Alice out of the chapel was the only circumstance in connection with the parish priest's invective that annoyed him. But why trouble himself about this young Dwyer? He and his would soon be out of the way. Yet Mr. Robert O'Keeffe, as he fixed his cold grey eyes upon that old homestead at the foot of the mountain, felt an indefinite dread that young Tom Dwyer, of Corringlea, would one day cross his path and defeat him.

He feared that the young farmer cherished a hopeless passion for Margaret Cormack, and Mr. O'Keeffe derived intense gratification from the thought that he was the successful rival of the man for whom he had conceived an instinctive dislike from the first moment he met him. In fact this jealousy had a good deal to do with the tenacity of purpose displayed by Mr. Robert O'Keeffe in his wooing. He had gone so far as to have made up his mind to take Margaret even with only the one thousand pounds, and sell his farm and residence to pay his debts if Lord Allavogga succeeded in getting the promised appointment for him. And now a new thought strikes Mr. O'Keeffe—if one daughter died, would not the dowry of the other be doubled?

He turned quickly round and looked at the parish priest. The honeyed smile was upon Father Feehan's lips, as, with half-closed eyes, he went on toying with the silver spoon upon which his crest (or some crest) was duly engraven, in the inevitable tumbler.

Both tumblers were empty since Father Clancy had left the table an hour before, and there was no intention of replenishing them. But for some inscrutable reason

men were never known to sit together in Shannacloough without each having a glass or a tumbler, or both, before him. We have seen the inevitable tumbler finished from a feeling of sheer compassion towards a merry-faced, talkative advocate of teetotalism, because "he looked so lonesome" without the inevitable tumbler.

"Did you hear what Joe is after saying?" Mr. O'Keeffe asked with a somewhat scrutinising glance at the round ruddy face.

"Yes," replied Father Feehan softly, with a slight inclination of the head.

The parish priest of Shannacloough is not at all like some other Irish priests whose portraits it has fallen to our lot to paint.

How much pleasanter it was to paint a great-hearted "Father M'Mahon" or a kindly, loving "Father O'Gorman?" But what can we do?

Look at this poor peasant woman. She starts in fear and terror, and turns wildly to the right and to the left as if hoping to find some means of escape from a deadly and imminent danger. Her heart ceases to beat; objects around her become confused and dim. And feeling her limbs sinking under her weight, she drops a hurried obeisance, and, recovering herself with an effort, totters forward upon her way.

What did it mean? The sky above her is blue and sunny. Everything around speaks of peace and holiness and love as she hastens homeward from the village between two rows of scented hawthorn. When at a bend of the lonely road the cause of her terror unexpectedly comes in view. It is her pastor! He sees her terror, her anguish, her misery. But he rides on, and does not seem to care. Then the poor frightened woman, having bent her knees in humble obeisance, totters forward upon her way, clasping her hands convulsively together, and turning her eyes to that sky beyond which—oh, blessed thought!—there is pity and compassion never-failing and perennial for us all.

Come a little further on between the scented haw-

thorns till you meet those sunburnt children returning from school. Mark how they hang their heads and draw shrinkingly close to the hedge. See the little bare-footed girl's hands tremble till her book falls upon the dusty road. But he rides on!

The husband of that terrified woman—the father of those trembling children—was the very poorest of the tenants-at-will you saw one day in the winter standing in the rain in front of Mr. Percy Perrington's hall-door, and he “voted against the priest.”

Then, ought we not go on with our portrait of the parish priest of Shannaclough? Are we not *bound* to paint the picture as truthfully and completely as we are able? No! We see a wasted arm raised up from a pallet of straw, warning us to desist.

Beside the wretched couch the same peasant woman and those sunburnt children—whom you have seen tremble at the sight of their pastor—are kneeling upon the damp clay floor.

The poor over-worked rent-maker, prematurely worn out, lies stretched upon his bed of straw, feeble and wasted, and with the damp of death upon his furrowed face. The storm howls so wildly outside that the dying man looks up every now and then as if he expected to see the frail roof to which he had clung so desperately and so long swept from over his head at last. But there is comfort in the thought that this would not be so bad as to have it pulled down by order of the landlord; for his wife and children might make a shelter for themselves with the fallen rafters.

There is such a great dread as well as great sorrow at the heart of the poor woman herself that she is indifferent to the storm and its possible consequences. This dread is shared by the children—even by the youngest—and she and they pray together in low fervent murmurs to the Mother of God to avert by her intercession the dreaded calamity, whatever else may happen to them. The dying man, whose mind is quite clear, thinks how difficult and even dangerous the deep and

narrow road leading to the cabin must be this pitch dark and stormy night; and, beckoning his wife to him, he tells her to place the rushlight in the little window. Before doing so she holds it up, touching it with her finger, first at one end and then at the other, to call his attention to its length, for she had noticed with a feeling of relief that so much of the rushlight remained unburned that the night could not be so far advanced as she had imagined. The sick man understands her action and smiles.

She kneels down again, and the murmured prayers are renewed in clearer though not louder tones.

Their hearts are lightened by the discovery that the time is not so long as they thought since the father got the change for the worse, and the oldest boy left the house.

He knows the way so well there is not much reason to fear that he has fallen into any of the deep and dangerous pools along the narrow road, even on that pitch-dark night. . . . But a great cry of anguish bursts from mother and children all at once—"He is dead! He is dead!"

But, no. Thank God! Oh, thanks be to the merciful God! his eyes open, and he breathes again! The murmured prayer is renewed once more—but in accents hurried and tremulous, and with agonized clasp of the hands and swaying of the body to and fro.

Suddenly they all—mother and children—leap to their feet, their faces lit up with a great joy. The dying man raises his emaciated arms, and in a firm, audible voice, utters the words, "God be praised!" No other word was spoken.

But if the great God of Heaven had come down from His throne of Light to banish sin and sorrow from this earth for evermore, His presence could not have filled human souls with more perfect joy and happiness than that with which the presence of their pastor filled the hearts of the dwellers under the thatched roof of that comfortless Irish cabin on that dark and stormy winter night!

He had left his warm bed without a murmur of com-

plaint. When the rain beat into his face, and the wind, like the arms of a giant, seemed endeavouring to push him back,—when he looked up on hearing the crash of a great bough torn from a tree in the avenue, and tried in vain to catch the faintest glimmer of light in the black sky, he recoiled not. On, on, on he pushed his horse through the storm and darkness of that fearful night, without fear or hesitation.

Only once did he feel his heart sink. It was when he had left the high road and turned into the narrow and crooked by-way. He knew what the light in the cabin window meant, and with the spur he urged his horse forward; when the animal's forefeet sunk deep into the soft broken road, and the priest thought for a moment he was coming down, then, for the first time, his heart sank; but it was not of his own danger he thought. His only fear was lest he should be *too late*.

The priest knelt down for a minute or two by the bedside, and then, putting on his stole, stood leaning over the dying man to hear his confession.

The mother and children knelt down again till the last rights were administered. Then Father Feehan spoke a few kindly words to the poor woman, and, tightening his shawl about his neck, went out to face the wind and rain and darkness again.

He met the boy who had been sent to call him, all dripping wet and covered with mud, at the door. But what did that poor sobbing boy care for wind or weather, for cold or wet, or hunger, so long as his father got the priest?

The poor fellow ran himself out of breath to keep up with the priest's horse, but he was left far behind.

Yes; they were full of happiness and gratitude, and resumed their watching in the assured hope that he who loved them and toiled for them would soon be in a better world, where nobody ever felt hungry or cold, where the poor were not scorned and trampled upon, where there were no savage bailiffs, no tyrant landlords, nor notices to quit.

CHAPTER XXVI.

PREPARING FOR THE VOYAGE—THE LAST NIGHT AT
ROCKVIEW—JOE SPROULE VISITS HIS INTENDED FATHER-
IN-LAW, WHO OFFERS TO PUT HIM THROUGH HIS FACINGS.

“Ah, then, Tom,” exclaimed Mrs. Dwyer, stopping suddenly as she passed the kitchen door on her way to the parlour, “where are you going with that bundle under your arm?”

There was a laugh—not quite so clear and ringing as it used to be—from the other side of the kitchen near the dresser, where Nannie and Nellie were packing some things into an old trunk, which, only that it looked so faded and dusty, might have suggested that the red bull-calf had been more successful in a second attempt at choking himself, and that his untanned skin was utilised in covering the trunk, beside which the twins were kneeling. Nannie, after all, was growing very brave and strong, and had gone on preparing and ordering everything required for the voyage, under Mrs. Cormack’s direction, with calmness and industry. She had said good-bye to most of her friends, never once wholly breaking down until she went to take her leave of the nuns and the girls in the little convent school.

Here the poor child lost all control over her sorrow, and had to be carried out of the convent in a paroxysm of hysterical sobbing and weeping.

Nellie was less deeply affected, though the tears welled into her dark eyes when her “pet nun” stooped

down to kiss her cheek. They often walked down into the long meadow to look up at the old house and the orchard as if to fix them indelibly upon their memory—Nannie always saying, as if she felt the trial for which she was endeavouring to nerve herself too great to be borne, “Oh! I *must* come back. I *can’t* bear never seeing it again!” But still they were both resigned, and felt comfort in the thought that they could be a help and a consolation to their father and mother—particularly to their father, “who never complained,” and that Tom could be with them. The next greatest pleasure to which they looked forward was keeping up a correspondence with Mrs. Cormack and Alice, and with their aunt and the Sisters of Mercy, who had been their friends and teachers. Yes; and with “poor Mr. Armstrong,” who was “sorrier for them than anybody.”

“What is that bundle, and where are you going?” Mrs. Dwyer asked again. “And what are ye laughing at?” she added, indignantly, on hearing the silvery laugh repeated.

“I’ll go down to the County Clare to see my relations, now that I’m some way decent.”

Mrs. Dwyer looked up in amazement.

“Some way decent!” she exclaimed, surveying the figure in the doorway in bewildered astonishment. “But I suppose”—here Mrs. Dwyer stopped short, recoiling a step backwards and placing her hand against the partition between the fire-place and the door, as if to keep herself from falling.

Cauth Manogue, who happened to be coming in from the yard at the moment, stopped short outside the door, and yelled. But Cauth’s surprise was of the pleasurable sort; and there she stood, her eyes wide open, and her broad, fat face all aglow with admiration and delight.

“God bless ye! God bless ye all!” exclaimed George Ponsonby, seeming to address himself to three pigeons with their heads under their wings on the roof of the cowhouse. “I’ll often think of ye; I will indeed,

Yes, and something tells me I'll see ye all again. But I'll be off at once to the County Clare to see my relations. God bless ye all!"

Nannie and Nellie, who were on their knees beside the old trunk, started up, and running to the door held out their hands to him.

"God bless ye! God bless ye!" poor Ponsonby repeated, as, letting the bundle under his arm drop upon the ground, he took the two little hands, one in each of his, while the tears gushed from his ever-wandering brown eyes, and ran down his flowing beard. "Something tells me I'll see ye again. I'm very glad," he continued, looking towards the bridge, "I'm very glad that Mr. Armstrong brought Rover home. I was afraid he might fall into Perrington's hands, and I'd rather have him shot. Fifty times!" he added, looking earnestly at Cauth Manogue, as if the matter was one that particularly concerned her.

"Oh!" said Nellie, "Con Cooney was here this morning for Rover. But Mr. Armstrong took him away yesterday. Con said he'd keep him for Mr. Armstrong the same as we did."

"That's very satisfactory," returned Ponsonby, stooping to take up his bundle. "The mountain air always agreed with Rover. And, besides, I'd be afraid that Jacky, the cobbler, might tie a kettle to his tail. You don't know the things that fellow is up to. God bless ye! God bless ye all!" he cried out again, as he hurried to the gate, the children kept their eyes wistfully upon him as he hurried across the meadow to the bridge.

"He's blowing his whistle," said Nellie, whose black eyes sparkled through her tears. "I wonder will we ever see him again?"

"I think he's a prophet," returned Nannie, whose blue eyes were lit up with a dreary gladness. "He said he'd see us again; and something tells me that his words will come to pass."

"Don't be talking!" exclaimed their mother, who

remained all the time standing with her hand against the partition as if she had not yet quite made up her mind whether she was going to faint or not. "I thought I'd drop when I saw the beard—and I sure all the time it was Tom! The Lord save us!—only for ye spoke to him nothing could persuade me that it wasn't his fetch." And Mrs. Dwyer took her hand from the wall and made the sign of the Cross upon her forehead with her thumb-nail, seemingly not altogether re-assured.

"But," she added, "sure, even if it was his fetch itself, it would not be a bad sign so early in the day as this." And Mrs. Dwyer, made quite cheerful by this bright idea, turned to abuse Cauth for an idle "struppish," with an energy that made the hand-maiden start in delighted surprise, and rush into the kitchen with a bound, saying to herself that she "didn't see the misthress in such good humour since the 'lection."

Ned Cormack had acted liberally and generously. He bought everything upon the farm at a valuation, besides giving Martin Dwyer one hundred pounds on getting up the possession. No one knew how much he had given the landlord. But Ned Cormack said to himself he had made a dear "bargain." It was the only chance he could see, however, of getting a long lease of Rockview—upon which he had expended so large a sum of money—and dear as the bargain was, he was satisfied with it. Neither did he grudge the loss of a hundred pounds or so for the sake of parting friends with Martin Dwyer and his son. Old Martin thought himself quite a capitalist; and even Tom looked forward hopefully, and considered that they would land in America with sufficient funds to purchase a good farm in one of the Western States. But our simple-minded old friend was quickly astonished at the number of small debts the great woman for business had managed to contract without his knowledge, and almost lost his temper when his wife suggested to him that "sure he could send the money home," and it would be time

enough to pay these troublesome people when they were settled down, and had "time to look about them."

"Do you want me to go away without paying my debts?" Martin Dwyer asked, his pale worn face flushing at the bare thought of such a thing.

Tom looked at his father, and felt a swelling in his throat—he was so proud of him. But poor Martin Dwyer, as he totted up the amount of the bills—among which Rody Flynn's was *not*—could not help thinking, with a rueful face, of the very considerable hole already unexpectedly made in his little capital.

* * * * *

"Don't you think Alice is looking very delicate, sir?"

"Yes, Tom," was the reply, in the same low tone as the question was asked in; "but she is more lovely than ever."

The speakers were Tom Dwyer and Ambrose Armstrong. It was in the drawingroom at Rockview. Mrs. Cormack was talking earnestly to Nannie and Nelly, who seemed almost cheerful—except every now and then when the thought would force itself upon them that this was the *last* time Mrs. Cormack would ever talk to them. Then a spasm of pain would pass over the faces of the children, and their kind friend would remonstrate with them, and go on speaking words of encouragement and advice, till the poor little creatures were becoming resigned and even happy. Alice reclined upon the sofa enveloped in a light shawl. She was stroking Nannie's golden hair with her snow-white hand, looking, as Tom had remarked, very pale and delicate. He was just thinking that he could not bear to bid her good-bye. He would go out upon some pretext or other before the time for leave taking came and slip away to escape the ordeal of bidding a last farewell to Alice.

"Papa," said little Eddy, who as usual was standing close to his father's side, "is anybody dead?"

"No, my boy," Ned Cormack replied. "Why do you ask such a question?"

"Because Alice looks like as if somebody was dead," Eddy answered.

Ned Cormack fixed his eyes upon his daughter's face with a troubled look. Until recently he had scarcely thought about Alice at all. But for some time back he felt her, as it were, growing into his affections. Glancing from her to his eldest daughter, who sat in the low chair, a look almost of bitterness might have been detected in Ned Cormack's hard eyes, it seemed so evident to him that Margaret at the moment thought or cared about nobody on earth but herself.

"Oh, Alice," said Nannie, "sure you won't forget to finish the sketch of the poor old house and send it to us. I did not like to be pressing you as you were not strong."

Alice reached out her hand, and taking a portfolio from the table, opened it, and held the finished sketch of the ivy-covered farmhouse, with a corner of the orchard, the brown rock in the background, before the eyes of the delighted children.

"I worked hard at it all day," said Alice; "but I could scarcely get on I was so distracted by Tom, who remained sitting under the brown rock so long that I began to be afraid that something was wrong with him."

While they were all admiring the sketch, Tom Dwyer thought the opportunity a good one to carry out his plan of stealing away unobserved. But as he was moving quietly across the room the door was opened, and the servant announced "Mr. O'Keeffe." Margaret heard the name with a start of delight. But it was not her lover, but his brother, the sub-inspector, who stood in the doorway. Margaret was advancing to shake hands with and welcome the police officer, when something in his manner made her pause. He seemed embarrassed, and looked from her to Alice and the two children, who were so much taken up with the sketch that they did not hear the servant mention his name. Suddenly they

were all startled to see one of the windows facing the door thrown up, and hearing a voice outside exclaim—

“There’s a crowd of people running across the bridge. Better lose no time.”

“It is very awkward,” stammered the sub-inspector, who seemed to lose his presence of mind on observing that all eyes were turned upon him.

“Will you please come out into the hall,” he added, addressing himself to Tom Dwyer, who moved towards the door, looking quite puzzled.

There was a great shuffling of feet heard in the hall. Ned Cormack started up, and hurried to the door, followed by Mr. Armstrong.

Margaret could see what was going on from where she stood, and her mother was soon by her side.

The hall was filled with armed police, their fixed bayonets flashing in the lamp light. Mrs. Cormack hurried to the drawing-room door, outside which her husband and Mr. Armstrong were standing, looking on in amazed bewilderment. She could not comprehend what it all meant until she heard Tom Dwyer say—

“I suppose you will have no objection to getting me my hat. It is hanging there over your head.”

Then Mrs. Cormack saw that Tom Dwyer was being hurried out of the hall, surrounded by fixed bayonets, and with handcuffs upon his wrists.

Fortunately Nannie and Nellie could not see into the hall from where they were standing with Alice; and Mrs. Cormack had the presence of mind to close the drawing-room door when she saw what had occurred.

“What does this mean?” Mr. Cormack asked, as the sub-inspector took Tom Dwyer’s hat from the rack and handed it to Sub-Constable Joe Sproule.

“Mr. Perrington,” Sub-Inspector O’Keeffe said, with some hesitation, glancing towards Mrs. Cormack, who was eagerly listening for his reply—“Mr. Perrington has been murdered.”

“Good heavens!” exclaimed Ned Cormack with a start; “that’s most unfortunate.”

"Surely you don't believe it?" his wife asked, with something like severity in her tone.

"I fear there is no doubt about it," he replied, looking to the sub-inspector as if hoping against hope that there possibly might be some mistake; "I fear it must be true."

"That Tom Dwyer had anything to do with it?" returned his wife, almost angrily.

"No, my dear," Ned Cormack replied, absently, and with his eyes bent upon the floor; "but that he is dead, and my lease not signed. It is really most unfortunate."

"Sir," said Sub-Constable Sproule to the sub-inspector, having returned into the hall after putting the prisoner's hat upon his head, "may I take the liberty of suggesting the prudence and advisability of moving on before the crowd of civilians on the road accumulates. This course is the more necessary as Constable Finucane and the men of the Gurthnaboher Station have gone on with the other prisoner."

"Yes," returned Sub-Inspector O'Keeffe; "let us go on."

* * * * *

Just eight-and-forty hours after Tom Dwyer's arrest, Murty Magrath, the "sheriff's officer," was sitting by his own fireside, his legs stretched straight out before him, his hands thrust into his breeches pockets, and his chin buried deep in the folds of his white cravat. Thus had he remained brooding since nightfall without ever having uttered a word, while his daughter busied herself in making everything about the house look bright and tidy, evidently in expectation of a guest. A martial tread was soon heard approaching the door; and Fanny Magrath, who was a pleasing and intelligent-looking young woman, with very black hair, and very dark but innocent-looking eyes, had hardly time to place a chair opposite her father's upon the well-swept

hearth, when her future lord strode into the kitchen, looking, if possible, a degree or two fuller of importance than usual. Sub-Constable Sproule, having communed with himself for half a minute, with his eyes turned to the rafters, sat upon the chair, and folded his arms across his chest, while Fanny lit a candle—the light of the bright cabin fire was sufficient for the “tidying-up” business—and sat down to her sewing in a convenient position to enjoy the conversation which she knew would very soon commence between Joe Sproule and her father.

“This is an affair of great importance : : : an’ some intricacy,” said Joe Sproule, after a silence of some minutes.

Murty Magrath drew in his legs, and getting all the fingers of his right hand inside the white cravat, gave it an impatient pull, as if he had been trying to grapple with some difficult problem, the solution of which seemed to elude him whatever way he turned it.

“Intricate,” he muttered. “That’s a very well spoken word. You are always happy in the selection of phrases.”

Fanny looked delighted, and gave herself more light by probing the candle-wick with her needle; while Joe, casting a sidelong glance at her, went on—

“I have taken a more or less responsible part in the investigation myself. The stipendiary alluded in complimentary terms to my description of the scene of the outrage, and the general intelligence and judiciousness of my conduct. In fact——”

“In fact,” interrupted his intended father-in-law, “you’re beginning to feel a breaking out of V’s already.”

“Well, possibly,” Joe replied, looking down at his arm. “I feel the V’s are in me, an’ only require the sunshine of opportunity to call ’em into visible existence.”

“Tell us all about it,” said Murty Magrath, with another impatient pull at his cravat. “What can Sloane have to say to it?”

“Sammy is the alpha and omega of the super-

structure," Joe replied, "but you know the inquiry was strictly private. The coroner's inquest was a mere matter of form, an' no wan was implicated by name. Sufficient evidence will be forthcoming on Friday to justify a committal. But the most important portion of the case for the Crown will not be revealed till the assizes."

"Tell me what Sloane has to say?" said Murty Magrath, authoritatively.

"In strict confidence," returned Joe Sproule, "an' as between men in the service of the Crown. Fanny, please see that there is no inquisitive civilian listenin' outside the door."

"Not a soul in the street," said Fanny, as she reclosed the door and returned to her chair, which she drew a little closer to the fire, lest any portion of the revelations about to be imparted by the sub-constable to the sheriff's officer should escape her.

"I speak," began Joe Sproule, "as functionary to functionary. Sammy's part is this: He alleges that while passing through Woodcourt by the path—to which, it seems, the public have a right—he, feeling fatigued, stretched himself in a trench or hollow on the ridge of the hill just outside the wood. You are aware that the field slopes gently up to this ridge, while on the wood side it drops down almost precipitously for some couple of hundred yards. Then there is a plateau or level of some twenty yards wide, and beyond that the ground down to the river, for a distance of some fifty feet, is almost perpendicular."

"I know the place," interrupted his listener. "You describe it well."

"So the stipendiary said," returned Sub-Constable Sproule, smiling with consequence, and stealing another glance at his intended bride, who probed the candle to its brightest as if to make it keep her face in countenance; for Fanny's face always grew radiant at her father's praise of her betrothed.

"Well," he proceeded, "Sammy alleges that while

thus reclining he heard a peculiar whistle down in the wood; and soon after a white greyhound ran up along the sloping fields from the direction of the public pathway and disappeared into the wood. Almost immediately he saw the deceased with a double-barrel gun in his hand entering the wood by the gateway at some distance further off than where the greyhound disappeared. You know there is a car-track from the gate down to the plateau—for at that part the wood is not very steep. Sammy wished to keep incognito from Mr. Perrington in consequence of a misunderstanding between 'em regardin' some items in his bill of costs as electioneering agent—cheers havin' been paid for in advance which were not forthcoming when required. But Sammy asserts that not bein' able to procure cheers he did the next best thing, and expended the money in silence, having overlooked Nell the cobbler by a mere oversight. However, as he was standin' up he heard the deceased's voice in the wood just below him, he havin' evidently come round by the plateau, callin' angrily to someone in the wood. Sammy stooped again, under the impression that the deceased had come upon a poacher, the place bein' infested with rabbits. Then he heard a shot an' a wild cry which he could not well describe. Then a crash, an' a second shot, followed by angry exclamations. He asserts he became alarmed, an' takin' off his hat he looked down through the trees, and on the level plateau, right below him, at a spot where the trees have been cut down, Sammy distinctly saw two men struggling together. One was the deceased; the other he swore most positively was young Dwyer. Fearing for his own safety, or hoping that help might be at hand, he looked round the field behind him, but could see no living creature but the sheep. When he looked down again to the plateau the two combatants had disappeared, and all was silent and desolate."

"The fellow is purblind," Murty Magrath remarked, looking intently into the glowing cabin fire. "But I

think he's too stupid to invent the story. Yet, still, I think it was all accidental."

"How would you account for the broken gun?" Joe Sproule asked. "An' the gunshot wound in the leg—though not sufficient to cause death? An' the contused wound over the temple? Accidental is an improbability."

"There may have been a struggle; but nothing premeditated," returned the bailiff, still gazing into the fire.

"What in the world could bring him there at all," his daughter asked, as she busily plied her needle. "An' they prepared to go to America the next mornin'."

"'Pon my word, Fanny," exclaimed her intended, turning round in his chair, and looking at her in surprised admiration, "you'd make a most *excellent* jurywoman. That's a most important feature in the circumstantial chain. An' then the sheet of notepaper, with the poetry written in pencil."

"What about that?" Murty Magrath asked, turning his eyes quickly from the fire to the speaker. "What about the sheet of paper?"

"It was found near the scene," returned Sub-Constable Sproule. "Something about the 'Queen of May,' an' three sixpences and a fourpenny bit rolled up in it."

Murty Magrath opened his eyes wide, looking surprised and puzzled for a moment, and thrusting his finger impatiently inside his high cravat.

"And what about Con Cooney?" he asked, after another minute's brooding.

"The white greyhound," Joe Sproule replied. "He has been traced into the field adjacent to the wood in company with the greyhound."

"There's something in it that I can't fathom with my present lights," said Murty Magrath, thrusting a bit of paper between the bars of the grate and lighting his pipe with it. "We'll see," he continued complaisantly, after taking a few whiffs, "how Sloane's story 'll stand the test of cross-examination."

"Do you think *I* have anything to fear from that ordeal?" the sub-constable asked, anxiously.

"Not you," Murty Magrath replied, with animation, pushing his hat back on his poll and thrusting his hands into the deep and wide pockets of his corduroy breeches. "You're a readin' man."

Fanny's face brightened up, and she tickled the wick of the candle with her needle as if to make it laugh with her for company.

"I'm at present engaged with 'The Disclosures of a Detective Officer: or, the Murderer's Stratagem,'" said Joe Sproule, with dignity. "'Tis, in my humble opinion, not inferior to Dumas or Sue; and I think it might be even placed on a parallel with the best of Harrison's. The detective department has its charms."

"Come in to-morrow night an' I'll put you through your facings," returned Murty Magrath, as the sub-constable stood up and stretched out his arms with a yawn.

"Through my facin's?" he interrupted, looking round in surprise.

"In cross-examination," the bailiff added.

"Yes," returned Joe Sproule, "I'll be thankful for your instructions. Good night, Fanny. I have something to talk to you about; but time is up, an' England expects that every man will do his duty, as Horatio said."

"I may be able to get some useful hints from him as the business proceeds," thought Murty Magrath, as he went on puffing jets of tobacco smoke up the chimney. "I'll take a walk by the short cut to Corringlea to-morrow, an' see the lie of the ground, an' try to learn what can be done in the way of an *alibi*. Their fathers were the only two men that ever done me a friendly turn. An', besides, that little beggar Sloane has a hand in the business. I'll advise Martin Dwyer to put the case in Rafferty's hands at once, an' I'll give him all the help I can. Lord! what a goose Sproule is!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

TOM DWYER AND CON COONEY IN THE DOCK.

"Are they all landlords?" Rody Flynn asked in a whisper, as he scanned the twelve faces in the jury-box with an anxious look in his round black eyes.

"Every man of 'em," returned Murty Magrath, who had just been conferring with Mr. Rafferty, the prisoners' attorney, and had stopped while passing Rody Flynn, who was standing among the crowd behind the dock, to ask whether Mr. Armstrong had yet arrived in town and where was he to be found. Mr. Armstrong, Rody was able to inform him, was getting tickets of admission to the gallery for Mrs. and Miss Cormack, where Mrs. Dwyer and Nannie and Nellie had already taken their places. Many eyes besides the little cooper's were turned to the two lovely little girls who looked so wistfully and sorrowfully down into the dock, never heeding the grim judges on the bench or the stern-looking men in gray wigs, who so frightened their mother that she became quite fidgety and bewildered, and was showing symptoms of running away when the entrance of Mrs. Cormack and Alice reassured her, and the good woman was enabled sufficiently to collect her senses to remember where she was. But Nannie and Nellie saw nothing, thought of nothing, but Tom, whom they seemed to devour with their eyes. He nodded to them and smiled; but it would not do, or rather it had the very contrary effect of what he intended; for, instead of an answering smile, the tears welled into their eyes, and Tom Dwyer

was turning away his head with a look of pain when he caught a glimpse of Alice Cormack's sylph-like figure gliding to where his little heart-broken sisters were sitting. For worlds he would not turn his eyes again to the gallery. He felt his face flushing, but by a great effort over-mastered his emotion, and nodded with a look of real pleasure to Mr. Armstrong, who was replying to some questions of Mr. Rafferty's which had been suggested by Murty Magrath, who stood behind them, his cravat being more smoothly folded as well as of a less dubious whiteness than usual. Then Tom Dwyer, observing a flush and a smile sweep over his fellow prisoner's face, which up to that was almost as gloomy and despairing as when he looked down into Julia Flynn's eyes while she undid the cord that fastened his coat on, and, following the direction of Con Cooney's eyes, Tom Dwyer recognised the round iron gray head and chubby face of the little cooper, who had worked his way through the crowd, and, emboldened by Murty Magrath's and Mr. Armstrong's presence, came sufficiently forward to get a look at his two young friends in the dock. Rody Flynn had started from Shannaclough that morning to be present at the trial just when Julia was going to milk the little brown cow, because he "could not rest," as he explained to Davy Lacy the evening before—who at the moment was somewhat awestruck by observing a crow alight upon a branch of the poplar tree,—a circumstance which to his knowledge had never before occurred since that memorable evening when his attention was attracted by the fluttering of the first leaf of that poplar tree that ever peeped above the red tiles of Mr. Armstrong's quaint old house. Davy Lacy devoutly hoped the appearance of that crow upon the poplar tree boded no evil to anybody, particularly as his wife had been grumbling about the hoarse crowing of the one-eyed cock at unseasonable, and consequently unlucky, hours during the afternoon.

Poor Julia sighed while she listened to this conversation in the workshop, and looked to the little home-

stead up among the heather with a sinking heart. And while she was milking the little brown cow in the morning she wished she could cry now, as she cried without wishing once before, as you may remember; but she could not. And there was her father off to the trial because he "could not rest." Mave Cooney and her mother and Joe were, she knew, also gone.

"God comfort them," Julia fervently prayed. But she could not help feeling that no one seemed to think of her own share of the sorrow and anxiety which not only pressed with a crushing weight upon the two mountain households, but really seemed to cast a gloom over the whole country. Con Cooney was a universal favourite; and Tom Dwyer, though not personally acquainted with so many people, was liked and respected and even admired by numbers who had never exchanged a word with him. The belief was universal that he had never deliberately and in cold blood meditated or attempted taking the life of any man. But there was an impression in the minds of many that the young man might have accidentally encountered the landlord in that lonely spot, and, driven to desperation by some brutal insult from the man who had acted with such injustice and cruelty, hurled him down the steep bank into the river, where his lifeless body had been found. If, then, the evidence against him proved was strong as rumour represented it, the worst, it was hoped, that was to be feared was a verdict of manslaughter. But, oh! what a terrible doom even this involved for young Tom Dwyer—a doom scarcely less appalling than the gallows itself. Many a dinner was left untasted upon the table in the parish of Shannaclough that day.

You need not wonder, then, that poor Mave Cooney fainted away the moment her gentle eyes rested upon her brother in the dock. She was carried senseless out of the crowded court by Mr. Armstrong and Rody Flynn—her lovely face and wavy auburn hair attracting the notice of the learned gentlemen of the Bar, and even

of the two grim occupants of the bench. One of the jury whispered to the foreman—

“That’s the girl who gave us the milk the day of the grouse shooting;” and the foreman, a quiet-looking gentleman, who had the reputation of being the most popular Master of Hounds in Ireland, nodded assent with something like pity in his eyes. In fact, the foreman and one or two other jurors glanced towards the dock, and began to think it just possible that these two young men might not be murderers after all. It would, perhaps, have been better if young Dwyer looked less like a gentleman and was not so much at his ease. But Con Cooney was the *beau ideal* of a good-natured, athletic young farmer, with possibly a trifle of vanity in his composition, but not the faintest trace (judging from appearances) of strong passion or vindictiveness.

But as the leading counsel for the Crown unfolded his case, the foreman shook his head, and was all but certain that Thomas Dwyer did kill and slay Percy Perrington, Esq., J.P., though he waited to hear the evidence before making up his mind that the deed was wilful murder and not merely manslaughter.

It is not our intention to embody in this history a detailed report of the trial, fraught though every word was with such agonising interest for so many of our friends, in whose welfare we fain would hope the reader feels some concern.

Bill Keerawan proved to the finding of his master’s dead body in the river, at the bottom of the wood, where the bank was very high and steep, but where the water was not quite three feet deep. The rent-warner also swore that some short time before being sent in search of his master, he saw Con Cooney standing upon the stile above the rabbit-burrow, not more than a hundred perches from the scene of the outrage, “looking about him,” as if he expected to see somebody.

On cross-examination, Bill Keerawan admitted that the prisoner could see him, and did not try to conceal himself in any way.

The medical evidence went to show that the wounds upon the body of deceased were not of themselves sufficient to account for death. The gun-shot wound in the leg, the doctor thought, could not have been inflicted by the accidental explosion of the gun while being carried by the deceased, as the trousers were not burned or blackened by the powder. Besides, the direction of the wound showed that the shot must have been fired by a person standing behind the murdered man.

The next witness was Sub-Constable Joseph Sproule, who proved to the finding of the double-barrel gun, with the stock smashed to pieces, and of a sheet of note-paper, with some poetry written in pencil upon it, within a few yards of the spot where it was evident the life-and-death struggle had taken place.

At this point the counsel for the defence consulted together, and it could be seen that they were in doubt as to the line of defence they ought to pursue. Tom Dwyer said the verses had been copied by him from Miss Alice Cormack's album, and he did not feel at liberty to inform Mr. Rafferty (who seemed a dreadfully unsentimental person) that Mr. Armstrong was the author. He never had pieces of silver rolled up in that or any other sheet of paper, but could throw no light whatever upon its being found in the wood. The junior counsel said he was sure it was a trumped up business altogether, but his wary leader shook his head.

While the lawyers were hesitating, poor Martin Dwyer, who stood near the dock, felt himself rudely pushed aside, and on turning round, his pale, patient face, saw Murty Magrath lean over the rail of the bar and grasp Attorney Rafferty by the shoulder. Martin Dwyer had never seen the sheriff's officer look so much excited. Rody Flynn saw at a glance that something extraordinary must have happened, and leaving old Mrs. Cooney's side, he stood behind Martin Dwyer, and raising himself upon his toes, the little cooper managed to look over the old farmer's shoulder to try and make out what was going on between Murty Magrath and

the attorney, who listened to the bailiff with a look of mingled interest and incredulity. Suddenly the attorney, much to his physical comfort, felt the grasp upon his shoulder relax, and immediately Murty Magrath was seen pushing his way through the crowd out of the court, dragging Joe Cooney by the collar after him.

Mr. Rafferty had a whispered consultation with counsel; and everyone felt that something unexpected was about to turn up. The trial, however, was proceeded with—the question being put to Sub-Constable Sproule about the silver coins found in the sheet of paper. The sixpence, Joe said in reply to prisoner's counsel, was not broken in two, it was a whole sixpence. Counsel remarked that that was very disappointing. He had thought there might have been some romance in the thing; but, no—Mr. Dwyer was a thrifty young man, and had his money carefully wrapped up for the voyage across the Atlantic.

Samuel Sloane, the principal witness for the prosecution, was then called and examined. As Joe Sproule has already given us a tolerably correct outline of the little bailiff's evidence, we shall not run the risk of wearying the indulgent reader with a repetition of it. He had to admit on cross-examination that he was very short-sighted, but added that the place where the deadly struggle had occurred was like a well-lighted stage, the sun shining upon the cleared space, and his being in the shade of the trees himself qualified him to see all the better.

He was afraid to render assistance or give the alarm. Besides, he had scarcely time to collect his senses; and when all was over he thought it most prudent to steal away home and say no more about it. When he heard that Mr. Perrington was dead he changed his mind and went to the stipendiary magistrate. That was before a reward was offered. But he believed he knew and expected that a reward would be offered.

"Did you recognise the features of the person whom you saw struggling with the deceased?" counsel asked.

"I have no doubt about it," Sammy Sloane replied. "I recognised him altogether."

"Look at the prisoner in the dock, and say do you swear upon your solemn oath that he is the man?"

"I do," the little bailiff answered, having turned round and looked at Tom Dwyer through his half-shut eyes.

"Was he dressed then as he is now?"

"No," was the prompt reply. "He wore a light-coloured tweed coat."

Tom Dwyer's dark eyes were seen to open wide at this reply; and Alice Cormack turned quickly round and whispered something in her mother's ear. Nannie and Nellie seemed to take no notice of the matter at first; but after a little while Nannie gave a great start, as if some sudden thought had struck her; and she, too, turned to Mrs. Cormack, who sat next her, and with her blue eyes full of light, began talking earnestly to her.

"Oh, Nannie," Nellie whispered, with a look of anguish, "look at Tom. I think he has lost all hope."

The counsel for the Crown, and the judge and the jury noticed, too, the great change that had come over the face of the young prisoner in the dock.

Up to this there was an expression not only of conscious innocence in his open handsome countenance, but he seemed as if he regarded the efforts of his prosecutors to fix the stigma of a foul crime upon him with defiant scorn. Now, however, his chin dropped upon his chest, and a look of intense grief fell like a shadow upon his face. But his own counsel, on observing this change, nodded and smiled, in reply to a meaning look of Mr. Rafferty's, who went to the dock and seemed to ask a question of Tom Dwyer.

"Oh, yes," Nellie repeated; "see how he shakes his head at whatever the attorney is saying to him; and Con Cooney is shaking his head, too. They are both quite sorry for something."

"Let us go down to the hall," said Mrs. Cormack.

"and send in for Mr. Armstrong. I'd like that Mr. Rafferty should know what Nannie has just told me."

In another minute the attorney was in earnest conversation with Alice Cormack and the two little girls, all three wondering at themselves for being so anxious to be called into the witness-box instead of being afraid; while poor Mrs. Dwyer was ready to drop, and seemed to look upon the calling up of the children to give evidence to save their brother from being hanged or transported as something even more appalling than seeing her only son standing in the dock to be tried for his life on a charge of wilful murder.

The tears came into Alice's eyes when poor, honest Martin Dwyer took her hand in his and pressed it without speaking a word.

The address of the prisoner's advocate to the jury was an able and a telling one, and at least three of the jury, including the foreman, came back to their original way of thinking; and, at the conclusion of the speech, were in a frame of mind to acquit both prisoners on the capital charge unless there was something which they had not yet heard to be advanced in the reply for the prosecution or in the judge's charge.

In any case, the foreman thought the second prisoner should be found "not guilty," the evidence against him was so slight, even supposing every word of it to be true. Con Cooney's mother was clear-headed enough to see this, and her assured calmness contrasted strangely with the anxiety and doubt which could be so plainly read in poor Martin Dwyer's care-worn face. His wife was simply in that state which she personally was in the habit of describing "confused."

All eyes were bent upon Alice as she took her place in the witness chair with an unstudied grace that seemed to take the bench and the bar somewhat by surprise. "Noble," was the epithet mentally applied to Alice Cormack that day by more than one "sucking Lord Chancellor." She gave her evidence clearly and unflatteringly.

Tom Dwyer was able to hide his emotion so long as he had only to look at her. But the first sound of her voice made his heart give a great bound, and his face flushed up to the roots of his black hair, and then became paler even than before. There was no proud feeling at all to buoy him up. He felt humbled and degraded, and as if the pollution of that dock would cling to him for ever. Ah! how different it was with the men who stood in that same dock charged with the crime of loving their country.

Alice was emphatic upon the point that the prisoner, Thomas Dwyer, wore a dark, and not a light, coat on the day in question. She was also quite positive that he remained reclining by the brown rock during the whole time she was finishing her sketch of the old farmhouse for the children.

"A very beautiful sketch it is," counsel remarked, holding it up so that the jury might see it. "And a most picturesque old house. And here, gentlemen, you can see the brown rock in the back ground, and a young mountaineer reclining in its shade, with a dark, and not a light-coloured, coat on."

Blandly cross-examined, Alice said she might have mistaken another person for the prisoner; but when he was remaining there so long she looked at him through the field-glass, which was a very powerful one, and could see him quite plainly—particularly when he stood up, and remained looking down towards the house for a good while. Asked whether a smart young fellow like the prisoner might not easily have run to the rabbit-wood and back while she was occupied with her sketching without her noticing his absence for an hour or two, Alice replied it could not be; that he could not have left the rock, even for ten minutes, during the whole three or four hours without her missing him.

Alice was pressed hard upon these two points, but her evidence could not be shaken. She was quite sure the man at the brown rock was Tom Dwyer, and that he could not have gone away even for half an hour

without her knowledge. Her bland questioner smilingly remarked that imagination was the most powerful of telescopes, and said she might go down.

Nellie told the story of her mother mistaking Ponsonby for her brother Tom, and was quite certain that it was not much past eleven o'clock when Ponsonby bade them good-bye and went away. Nannie came next, and gave similar evidence. There was a laugh when the grim judge looked up from his notes, and said—"Has she not told all that before?" and counsel replied, "No, my lord, this is not the same witness."

After the twin sisters had given their evidence, a few minutes elapsed without another witness being called, and Mr. Rafferty and the junior counsel talked hurriedly together, and seemed at a loss how to proceed.

"Do you close?" the judge asked.

"My lord," replied the junior counsel, "we are every moment expecting the arrival of an important witness; but if your lordship so desires I'll address the jury at once."

At this moment Joe Cooney rushed breathlessly into court, and whispered something to Mr. Rafferty, who had run eagerly to meet him.

"My lord," continued the junior counsel, after conferring for a moment with the attorney, "an accident has occurred. But I am instructed that the witness will be in court within an hour at farthest."

"Really, my lord, this seems very irregular," counsel on the other side interposed. Whereupon a legal argument ensued that lasted fifteen minutes, and filled Martin Dwyer with anxiety and apprehension, particularly when he saw them opening and shutting the big books, though he had not the faintest conception of what it was all about. And as the reader would most probably be in the same state of mind if we reproduced the shorthand writer's report of this learned and animated discussion, in which the junior counsel for the defence (in the absence of his senior, who was at the time engaged in the Record Court) laid the foundation of his fame, we

shall take advantage of the fifteen minutes during which this "purely legal" question was being argued to throw some light upon what must have seemed Murty Magrath's inexplicable behaviour in seizing Joe Cooney by the collar and hurrying him out of court, as if honest Joe had been caught in the act of committing a felony under the very noses of two of her gracious Majesty's most learned and venerable judges.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A DRIVE TO KNOCKGRANA AND BACK—THE TRIAL COMES TO AN ABRUPT CONCLUSION—HOME AGAIN TO CORRIGLEA—THAT NIGHT WEEK.

MURTY MAGRATH was elbowing his way back to the courthouse through the crowd that blocked up the street in front of that edifice, after despatching a hasty breakfast at the "Rambler's Rest," when he became conscious that among the sea of heads through which he was struggling there was one peculiar countenance greeting him with a very broad grin of recognition. But who the owner of that well-known face was the bailiff tried in vain to remember.

Again and again he encountered the face as he worked his way through the swaying crowd, but could not even guess where he had seen it before.

But when at length he had got clear of the crowd, and was admitted inside of the gate, there was the familiar face grinning amicably at him through the iron rails.

"Arrah, Bob," exclaimed Murty Magrath, adjusting his white cravat, which was rapidly falling into its normal crumpled condition, "is that you?"

"Begor, aye," Bob Dee replied, with a still broader grin.

"Why, you are a smart fellow to-day, Bob," returned the tall bailiff, surveying Bob Dee from head to foot, and noticing how much larger the sooty face appeared under the low, round hat then perched upon the shock

head than when surmounted by the clerical broad-brims which Bob Dee usually affected. "Where did you get the coat and hat, Bob?"

"I stole 'em," Bob answered, gleefully. "From Ponsonby," he added in a stage whisper, thrusting his swarthy face between the thick iron rails. "But don't tell him I towld you. He made me promise lasht noight that I wouldn't tell a mother's sowl that he was after comin' home from the county Clare. He says he do see sperits every noight, an' they won't let him sleep."

"Is Ponsonby after comin' back?" Murty Magrath asked, rather carelessly. "I was wishing to see him, but 'tis too late now."

"Faith, an' he is so," said Bob Dee. "An' his feet blishthered from walkin'. An' the greyhound on thre legs."

"The greyhound!" Murty Magrath exclaimed with a start. "Is it the white greyhound—Rover?"

"Aye, begor," returned Bob Dee. "But he made me swear to the five crasses that I wouldn't tell any wan. He wanted to stay up at the fire all the noight, but my mother made him go to bed, an' whin he was asleep I stole over to search his pockets to know had he any money, but he had the breeches an' waistcoat undher his head, an' the divil a copper was in the coat. So I stole the coat an' the hat at the first loight, an' med off," added Bob Dee in high good humour.

"Bob," said Murty Magrath, hurriedly, "if you stay there till I come back, an' do what I tell you, I'll give you a piece of tobacco twice as long as the one I gave you on the day we had the bit of fun at the jail."

"Faith, an' I will so," returned Bob Dee, his eyes open wide in the intensity of his delight at the glorious prospect of an interminable smoke.

Then Murty Magrath ran to the attorney and said what he had to say, and rejoined Bob Dee in less than five minutes after, holding Joe Cooney in a vice-like grasp,

"In the name o' the Lord, Murty," Joe remonstrated, "let me go, an' tell me what you're up to."

"I want to save your brother from the gallows, an' hunt Sloane back into oblivion," returned the sheriff's officer. "So be off, as fast as your legs can carry you, an' have Mr. Cormack's horse to Father Feehan's side-car before Bob Dee an' I are at the hotel, after buying a whole shilling's worth of tobacco. Come along Bob, an' you'll see what a piece of fun we'll have to-day."

Just one hour and twenty minutes after the purchase of the tobacco, Joe Cooney pulled up his foaming horse at the foot of Knockgrana hill.

"Come, Bob," said Murty Magrath, jumping off the car, "have you the pipe filled again?"

"Faith, an' I have so," replied Bob, looking at the well-filled bowl of his "dudheen."

"Well, we have no more matches," returned the bailiff. "So come up an' we'll have a great smoke at your mother's. Nothing like a nice bit of turf, Bob, or a handy bit of furze, to kindle the pipe. Come on fast, an' I'll give you the rest of the tobacco."

Ponsonby was sitting at the fire in the hut up on the furzy hill in his shirt sleeves, with the white greyhound lying at his feet. He stood up and seemed startled when Murty Magrath, stooping low, entered the little smoky cabin.

"Molly Dee is gone into Shannaclough for some things," said Ponsonby, casting a furtive look round as if seeking for some way of escape.

"Ponsonby," Murty Magrath began gravely, "I think you always said that Martin Dwyer, of Corriglea, was your friend?"

"Certainly I did," was the reply. "There was something in Martin Dwyer's face, and in Rody Flynn's, that I never saw in any other face, except Molly Dee's."

"Well, would you like to do Martin Dwyer a great service?" the bailiff asked.

"I'd lay down my life for him," Ponsonby answered, his wandering eyes becoming quite steady as he

looked straight into his questioner's face. "Yes," he added, calmly, but firmly, "I'd *die* for Martin Dwyer of Corriglea."

"Well," said Murty Magrath in a low earnest voice, "young Tom Dwyer and your old friend Con Cooney are going to be hanged for killing Perrington, and if you have the courage to tell the whole truth you can save them—save poor Martin Dwyer's only son. Will you do it?"

"My cousin in the county Clare," returned Ponsonby, "read something about it in the newspaper last Sunday; and ever since I could not sleep—a voice was always calling me to go and save the innocent. So I came home; but I thought I saw a spirit in the glen as I was coming up last night, and my courage failed me; and I was going to start again for the county Clare. Then I thought I'd see Rody Flynn first. But when I got up I hadn't a sign of my coat or my hat. I knew 'twas blessed Bob's work, and made up my mind to wait till he'd come home."

"Here is your coat and hat," said Murty Magrath; "I made Bob bring them home to you. And now will you come and save Tom Dwyer's life?"

"Certainly I will," he answered, putting on the coat and hat. "Show me how it is to be done, and I'll do it or die."

"I'll tell you all as we go on," the bailiff replied; "but there's not a minute to be lost."

"Aint the fun over yet? or am I goin' to get the tibacky at all?" Bob Dee asked, dolefully, and with a blank stare, as the two were leaving the cabin.

"Oh! I had like to forget," said Murty Magrath, stopping outside the door; "here is your tobacco, Bob. And now sit down there and mind the house, and smoke your belly full till your mother comes home. Come along, Ponsonby; I always knew the good drop was in you."

They descended to the road, Ponsonby talking rapidly all the way, the bailiff drawing him out by an occasional

question or comment until his story was interrupted and the narrator put off the track by an exclamation of surprise from Joe Cooney, as he seized the reins and jumped upon the car, impatient to get back to town to learn the result of the trial.

"Is it Ponsonby you have?" exclaimed Joe Cooney in amazement.

"Yes, Joe. How are you, Joe?" Ponsonby answered, abruptly breaking off in the narrative, every word of which had been eagerly devoured by the sheriff's officer. "Oh!" continued Ponsonby, "I'm very stupid. I forgot to tie up Rover. I must go up again and tie him up, though I don't like at all to leave him by himself with that fool Bob Dee."

Murty Magrath was beginning to feel uneasy lest too much time should be lost or his charge become altogether unmanageable, when he saw an old woman come round a sharp turn of the road within a few yards of them.

"You're all right," said Murty Magrath; "here is Molly Dee, and she'll take care of the greyhound."

"Molly," said Ponsonby, as the old woman came up, "take this fellow up, and don't let Bob bring him out till I come back. See, I'll tie this string about his neck and you can lead him like a lamb."

"What news have ye?" the old woman asked, looking at Joe Cooney, who had his whip raised impatient to be off.

"Good news, Molly," Joe answered. "Come, up with ye, Murty."

"I'll go back agin every step an' tell that to Julia Flynn, the poor thing is so lonesome by herself," returned Molly, who was a vigorous old dame enough, though bent nearly double and obliged to lean upon a short stick when standing or walking.

At last the car started off with a bound, the white greyhound looking wistfully after it, but keeping so quiet by the old woman's side that she thought it unnecessary to hold him with the cord, and let it drop from her hand as she adjusted her old gray cloak to

commence the ascent of the steep hill to her cabin. But Rover's momentary stillness seemed to have been the result of surprise; for scarcely had the cord left the old woman's hand when he sprang forward in pursuit of the car as if he had been slipped at a hare upon the mountain.

"Stop, Joe!" exclaimed Ponsonby, "there is Rover. He'll be destroyed. The wounded leg is not rightly well yet. He was quite lame last night after the journey from Clare."

"What are we to do?" Joe Cooney asked. "Let us take him up on the car."

In less than an hour after the white greyhound and George Ponsonby, sitting side by side upon Father Feehan's car, were in view of the town; and Joe Cooney's hand shook as the thought occurred to him that the jury were at that moment delivering their verdict.

"We did that ten miles in less than an hour," said Joe Cooney, with a flourish of his whip. "This horse of Mr. Cormack's is a great stepper."

"Never shout till you're out of the wood, Joe," returned Ponsonby, whose coherence and readiness in conversation on the way had quite surprised and greatly delighted Murty Magrath. "Never shout till you're out of the wood."

The words were scarcely spoken when Ponsonby and his white greyhound, and Joe Cooney and Murty Magrath were all flung flat upon the road. Nobody, however, was hurt—not even Ned Cormack's horse, though he came down as if shot without a moment's warning.

"Thanks be to God," said Joe Cooney as he passed his hand down the horse's forelegs. "There's not a scratch on him. But," he added, standing upright and ruefully scratching his poll, "the two shafts are in smithereens."

"Throw off the harness," said Murty Magrath, "and ride in as fast as his legs can carry you. Send a car out to meet us, an' then go an' tell Mr. Rafferty what's after happening."

Joe Cooney obeyed these orders to the letter. But what was his amazement, some ten minutes after delivering his message to the attorney, to see that gentleman rapidly taking notes, and the sheriff's officer himself bending over him and whispering into his ear.

"Be the hokey, he's enchanted," muttered Joe Cooney to himself.

But the matter was quite simple ; for Joe had scarcely galloped out of sight of his two companions when a car after depositing a commercial traveller and his traps in the next town, came up, and Murty Magrath was not the man to let such a piece of good luck go unutilised. So, while the junior counsel went on laying the foundation of his fame, Mr. Rafferty went on taking notes, and then hurried off to the Record Court for the senior counsel, who was very soon in his place again, with Mr. Rafferty's notes in his hand.

At this stage, and in the midst of the dead silence that followed the junior counsel's able and lucid argument in favour of a short adjournment of the proceedings, the court was startled from its propriety by a loud cry, the precise character of which it was not easy to determine. Everyone looked up in surprise and expectancy. But Tom Dwyer—though for a moment as startled as anybody else—could not, for the life of him, suppress an irresistible tendency to laugh ; for in the cry that so inopportunately broke the silence of the crowded court, he recognised one of Cauth Manogue's familiar yells, he until that moment being unaware of her presence at the trial. Glancing in the direction indicated by Cauth's wide-open eyes, Tom Dwyer himself could scarcely repress an exclamation of surprise when he beheld George Ponsonby walking quietly towards the steps by which he was to ascend the witness table.

"My lord," said the senior counsel, "this matter may be allowed to drop. We are now prepared to go on. Call George Ponsonby."

There was considerable surprise and some commotion

observable among the Crown Prosecutor's assistants as Ponsonby took his place in the witness chair, and Sub-Constable Joe Sproule and three other policemen were hurriedly called into consultation.

The witness, however, was sworn, and in reply to counsel stated "that he remembered the morning the prisoner, Thomas Dwyer, called him into his bedroom at Corrignlea, and gave him a whole suit of clothes, 'from top to toe,' in which he (witness) dressed himself immediately, his old clothes not being 'particularly decent;' that, finding himself so respectably dressed, he made up his mind to go and see his relations in the county Clare; but having set some snares in the rabbit burrow, he said he'd go there in the hope of having a couple of graziers to give the old woman in whose house he lived before setting off on his journey. He sat in the burrow for a long time watching his snares; but seeing no chance of catching a rabbit that day unless he waited till after nightfall, he put his snares in his pocket, and was going back to the place where he had been sitting for his old clothes, which were tied up in a bundle, when," continued the witness, "I put this whistle to my mouth, and blew it." Suiting the action to the word, Ponsonby pointed his whistle at the presiding judge, who held up his hand as if he thought the witness was taking aim at his nose with a view to shooting a pea at it. But the witness merely blew a long clear note, and before his lordship had time to move his hand from his nose to his ear the white greyhound sprang lightly upon the table, and stood beside the witness chair, seemingly as much at his ease as if he had leaped upon the parapet of Corrignlea Bridge to take a view of the surrounding country.

"My Lord," interposed the senior counsel for the Crown, "I am instructed that this witness is a poor demented creature, whose evidence is quite worthless."

"Most of the gentlemen know me," said Ponsonby, pointing to the jury-box. "I know the nature of an oath," he continued—remembering Murty Magrath's

instructions during the rapid drive from Knockgrana. "And I think I can confidently refer to the foreman and several gentlemen of the jury as to my character."

"My lord," said the foreman, "the jury would like to hear what he has to say."

"When you blew the whistle," said the examining counsel, "what happened?"

"Just what has happened now," Ponsonby answered. "Rover was by my side in a minute. I don't know how it happened that he was within hearing, as Mr. Armstrong had taken him home from Corriglea the day before. But I sat down again to think what I had best do, as I was very anxious about Rover, and sorry to part from him. So some time passed while we were sitting under the thick bushes in the wood. Then I heard a step approaching, and Rover just ran out into the open space to see who it was. I thought it might be Bill Keerawan, and didn't mind. But a shot was fired quite close to me, and when I looked up there was my beautiful hound struggling upon the ground all covered with blood and howling with pain. I was mad," Ponsonby went on, his brown eyes flashing with anger. "I was in a rage. I didn't know what I was doing. He was going to fire again, but I rushed at him and flung him upon his face. Then I took up the gun, and ran to the big oak tree, and smashed the stock in pieces. I knew the barrel exploded when I struck the stock against the oak tree. But I didn't mind. I ran to my poor dog, and was stooping over him when I was seized from behind by the neck. He dragged me across the open space, and thought to fling me down the precipice into the river."

"Who was it did that? Did you know the person?" counsel asked.

"Of course I knew him," was the reply. "'Twas Percy Perrington. 'You d—d villain,' says he, 'you're after shooting me.' He had me over the brink of the precipice when he said this. I remember seeing the water down below. I grasped a young ash tree

when he flung me from him. But," the witness continued thoughtfully, "I think he over-reached himself trying to fling me over. All I can be sure of is that he fell down headforemost, and I heard a splash in the river below."

"Go on," said counsel, seeing that the witness paused—but fearing to throw him off the track by a direct question.

"Well," continued Ponsonby—his eyes, which up to this had been steadily turned towards the Bench, beginning to wander in the old dreamy fashion—"a great dread came over me then. I think I lost my presence of mind, I carried my poor wounded dog to the cave at the far-off side of the wood, and stopped the bleeding and picked some of the shot from his shoulder, and tied a bandage round his leg. I was wishing to bring him to Rody Flynn, but I was too much afraid. So after nightfall myself and Rover started for the county Clare. I used to carry him in my arms till he got used to limping on three legs. My friends received me kindly; but I was restless and uneasy all the time I was there, and last Sunday I heard something about this business, and that night I had a very remarkable dream; so I came back to Knockgrana, travelling night and day. I intended to go in next morning to make inquiries of Rody Flynn, only that fool Bob Dee stole my coat, as I knew I could believe anything he'd tell me—unless it happened in the Queen's County," Ponsonby added, parenthetically. "Besides, there's something in Rody Flynn's face," he went on. "That's the reason I always kept the fourpenny bit he gave me long ago, coming home from his wife's funeral. And for the same reason I said I'd keep the sixpence Martin Dwyer gave me that morning."

"What did you do with that sixpence?" counsel ventured to ask.

"You see," the witness replied, "the pockets of these clothes that Tom Dwyer gave me were strange to me, and when I was thinking which would be the

best to keep Martin Dwyer's sixpence and Rody Flynn's fourpenny bit in, so that I mightn't be tempted to change them when I'd be hungry, I felt a piece of paper in this waistcoat pocket. So I then folded them up in it, and held it in my hand, undecided which pocket to keep it in."

"Have you those pieces of silver now?" counsel asked.

"I never saw a sight of them since," returned Ponsonby. "I would not part with them for their weight in diamonds. There was a small hole in Martin Dwyer's sixpence, and I said to myself I'd get a hole like it bored in Rody's fourpenny bit, and wear them like medals."

"Will the Crown produce these pieces of silver?" prisoner's counsel asked. "If not, I'd like to ask a question of that very intelligent witness for the prosecution, Sub-Constable Sproule."

"We admit the hole in the sixpence," said the prosecuting counsel. "But let us see whether we cannot get to the bottom of all this," he added. "Do you know, if you are believed, you must stand in that dock and be tried for murder?" he asked, turning to the witness with a terrible scowl.

"I know it," Ponsonby answered firmly. "But do you want me to let two innocent men be hung or transported to save myself? Do you think I'd ever know an hour's happiness if such a thing was done. Am I to allow Martin Dwyer's gray hairs to be brought with sorrow to the grave to save my own wretched life?" he asked indignantly, pointing, as he spoke, to the old farmer's pale, worn face. "No," he went on, rising to his feet and confronting the two grim judges on the Bench, "I'd die a thousand deaths first."

"Oh! of course, you'd do *anything* to save the life of Martin Dwyer's son?" the cross-examining counsel went on, nodding to the jury. "You'd do anything you'd be asked for Martin Dwyer's sake—wouldn't you now?"

"My lord," said the foreman, "the jury desire me to say that it would be a useless waste of time to prolong the trial further."

"Are the jury unanimous that the two prisoners in the dock should be acquitted of the charge of being in any way concerned in causing Mr. Perrington's death?"

"Yes, my lord," the foreman replied, "we are prepared to hand up a verdict of 'not guilty.' And the jury are further of opinion that had the facts brought to light in the course of this trial been made known to the coroner's jury their verdict would have been one of 'accidental death.'"

There was breathless silence for some seconds. The decision of the jury seemed to have come too suddenly and unexpectedly for those most deeply concerned to comprehend its meaning. Nannie and Nellie left their seats, and looking appealingly up into Ambrose Armstrong's face, and speaking both together in a whisper asked—

"Oh, Mr. Armstrong, what does it mean?"

"It means, my dears," he replied, putting his handkerchief to his eyes, "that Tom will be home at Corringlea with you to-night. He'll walk out of that dock a free man in five minutes."

Then the breathless silence was broken, and Tom Dwyer's eyes were blinded by tears when he looked around and saw that his two little sisters had rushed into each other's arms with a cry of joy.

A loud cheer rang through the court, and was taken up by the crowd outside. The two young men in the dock shook hands, but Tom Dwyer felt no way elated. He said mournfully to his companion—

"We have nothing to be proud of, Con; but that poor fellow looking down at us"—for Ponsonby and his white greyhound were still on the table—"that poor fellow has some reason to be proud."

Martin Dwyer felt his hand gripped as if in an iron vice.

"Do you remember the night yourself and Joe Cooney saved me long ago?" Murty Magrath asked.

"I do, well," Martin Dwyer replied.

"So do I," returned the sheriff's officer, making room for his windpipe in the high white cravat, and then walking off with his hands under his coat tails to see how Sammy Sloane was looking.

And curiously enough at that identical moment Julia Flynn was standing by the side of the little brown cow, with her violet eyes turned towards the mountain.

Oh! if she could only cry, she might be able to milk the little cow, and carry home her pail as usual. But with that dull pain at her heart, and that nervous faintness all over her, she felt as if she could do nothing in the world but just lie down and die.

"Good news, Julia! Good news!"

She looked towards the gate, and there was old Molly Dee whirling her crutch over her head.

Then the tears that were locked up all that day gushed forth, and Julia Flynn soon sat down to her milking after a cry that did her heart good.

Mr. Armstrong was quite right. Tom Dwyer was home again at Corriglea that night.

But that night week a nun was kneeling in her cell, from the window of which she could see the distant summit of the mountain near Corriglea. A great sorrow might be read in her pale handsome face, which in the soft moonlight looked still young.

"Oh, God!" she exclaimed, clasping her hands, while the tears fell fast from her upturned eyes. "Oh, God! there is not one belonging to me in the home where I was born! The old house is desolate to-night."

CHAPTER XXIX.

JIM FOLEY IN A PASSION—A SCENE IN BULLY'S ACRE—
UP THE PURPLE HEATHER—THE "SAME AS ALWAYS."

"I NEVER thought," said Davy Lacy, as he leant with his hand under his chin upon the half-door of the cooper's workshop, "I never thought that old house could be made look so lively."

It is scarcely necessary to say that the old house to which Davy Lacy referred was Mr. Ambrose Armstrong's residence, which, newly plastered and the window sashes prettily painted, quite distracted the melancholy shoemaker from his contemplation of the poplar tree, and absolutely seemed laughing into his face.

"Here is himself riding down the street," said Julia Flynn, who, with her cloak and bonnet on, was standing with Mave Cooney outside the door, impatiently waiting for Joe, who had promised to accompany his sister as far as the old churchyard, on her way to her mountain home, and take care of Julia coming back. "Here is himself riding down the street," said Julia, "and you might say the same of him; he looks so fresh and so bright."

"How do you do, Mave? Going to walk, Julia?" said Mr. Armstrong, as he rode by upon a stout, yellow pony, which salutation the girls only answered with smiles.

"The pony is in great order," Rody Flynn remarked, rising from the block in the workshop, upon which he

had been sitting, and coming to the door. "I knew the dash of blood I took from her would serve her. She's as sleek as a mouse, an' as fresh as a daisy. But Ponsonby takes great care of her. 'Tis surprisin' how handy he is about everything. He reminds me of a servant I knew that was cook, an' butler, an' coachman, an' gardener, an'—valet to an old gentleman in the Queen's County."

"I always said," returned Davy Lacy, "that Ponsonby wasn't rightly cracked. Still, I didn't expect he'd stay so long with Mr. Armstrong. I doubt he'd stay quiet for a month with anybody else. But between his master and the yellow pony, and the white greyhound, the fellow seems to be in heaven," added Davy Lacy, fixing his eyes upon the little cooper, as if George Ponsonby's felicity was a scandal that shouldn't be tolerated in a Christian country.

"Here is Joe, at last," said Julia, with a displeased look. "I wouldn't wait for him at all only I was afraid if we went without him Jim Foley would follow us."

"'Tis time for you," said gentle Mave Cooney, trying also to look displeased, as Joe leisurely strolled down to them to the tune of the "Unfortunate Rake."

"Oh, I see!" Julia remarked archly, and with a laugh in her violet eyes, of which the sunny sky, even upon that summer Sunday afternoon, might have been jealous. "I see what delayed you, Master Joe. Here is Molly Hanrahan coming down with a basket of fruit on her head. I wonder had she anyone helping her to pick them? I'll tell Mrs. Slattery to keep her eyes open."

"Divil a use for you," returned Joe, who clearly did not want to plead not guilty to the soft impeachment. "Molly 'ud sing her into good humour if she was bustin' wud the sulks. I said this minute to Father Clancy that we'd all have fine times uv it while the currants and gooseberries 'ud hould. But come," Joe Cooney added, as the orchardman's daughter passed them by with a conscious blush, "I'll thrate ye to some uv the white currants. They're the finest you ever laid

your eyes on. She ran short uv 'em to-day, though she thought last night she wouldn't sell all she brought home, an' had to go up for another lot. Terry 'ill make good profit by the garden this year."

"Yes," said Julia, with mock disdain; "people are saying whoever gets Molly Hanrahan will get a nice penny with her."

It may safely be inferred from this little passage of arms that Julia Flynn and Joe Cooney understand one another now. For a long time she was quite miserable about "Poor Joe," and shrank from letting him know how matters stood between her and Con. But when one evening on her way to milk the little brown cow she took heart of grace and imparted the important secret to the honest fellow—hiding her blushes with the magnificent bunch of lilac he had just presented to her—Julia was almost disappointed at the unmixed delight with which he learned that she was to be his sister, and not the wife of that intolerable Jim Foley. And though Julia laughed whenever she spoke to him about Molly Hanrahan, there were moments when she felt just a little jealous vexation to find the siren had so bewitched him that Joe was only too ready to exchange her society for that of sunburnt Molly Hanrahan.

This evening, however, Julia was in too good humour to be vexed at anything; for there was a letter from Charlie the day before to say that they might expect him home at any moment after its receipt. And gentle Mave Cooney so thoroughly sympathised with her friend, that she too was quite in a state of excitement ever since she heard the news. In fact, now that Joe was to be with them they were rather pleased than annoyed when—while Molly Hanrahan was measuring out the white currants, which she sold by the pint, upon two fresh green cabbage leaves—they caught sight of Jim Foley's ferocious beard and brigandish hat under the swinging sign. It would be such fun if he condescended to honour them with his company, to hear him sounding his own praises.

Sub-Constable Sproule was admiring the marvellous quadruped upon the swinging sign, which he once, while in a morbid state of mind, turned from with disgust under the impression that it was the "photograph of the black pig painted white." He was interrupted in this pleasing occupation by an uproar in Bully's Acre, the noise of which also brought Jim Foley outside the door of the public-house, within which he had been sulking, like Achilles in his tent, utterly scorning and despising "them fellows" who were displaying their strength or skill in Bully's Acre at throwing a "pushing stone," and playing nine-holes—the latter game having been revived principally through the exertions of Davy Lacy, in whose possession the metal bowl had remained rusting for nearly a generation. The uproar just referred to was, however, merely the consequence of an incidental dog fight, which was quickly suppressed by the owners of the animals pulling them asunder and administering a kick to each, which sent them howling off the field in opposite directions; and Sub-Constable Joe Sproule resumed his contemplation of the swinging sign, and Jim Foley retired with arms folded, feeling as he strode back to the door that Julia Flynn and Mave Cooney were admiring him. Their laughing eyes, however, grew serious and surprised when they saw old Larry Foley with his head bent down and his hand pressed against his nose, running up the bridge and entering his own door almost at his son's heels. Their concern was rather increased than otherwise when they saw Larry Foley's wife shut and bolt the half-door with a bang. And as they were passing over the bridge immediately after, the two young girls could scarcely suppress a scream when they saw Jim Foley throw himself over the half-door, his eyes flashing fire, while his mother made an ineffectual attempt to hold him back by clutching at his coat, that garment being of the style called "monkey-jacket."

"Och! bad cess to it!" cried Mrs. Foley, as Jim got off scot-free; "if there was the laste bit of a tail to

his coat I had him pinned. Och, mille-murdher!" she continued, clapping her hands in despair, "he'll kill somebody. He'll knock the daylights out of 'em all. Och! Joe Cooney, avic machree, thry an' pacify him, an' don't let him kill all before him." And Mrs. Foley pressed her hand against her side and seemed about to faint.

Julia and Mave, not well knowing what to think, followed Jim with their eyes as he rushed in among the crowd in Bully's Acre. The athlete paused with the "pushing-stone" on his shoulder, and instead of straining every muscle to beat "the best throw," let it drop without an effort at his feet. The bowl, which had just left the player's hand, was allowed to roll unheeded on its way to the nine-holes. A number of women, old and young, who were sitting upon the trunks of several large oaks and ash trees recently purchased by Rody Flynn at an auction of timber at Woodcourt—the largest being the "big oak tree" against which Ponsonby smashed Mr. Perrington's double-barrel gun—started to their feet, looking too frightened to run for their lives. A lane was made in the crowd as the terrible Jim rushed on to the end of the little green, and then turned round and rushed back again, looking fiercely from side to side like an enraged bull. There were some strangers among the crowd, who retreated to a safe distance; but it might soon have been seen that most of the young men present looked on in astonishment rather than in apprehension that Jim Foley was going to kill anybody and eat him. After the wild rush to the far end of the green and back, Jim turned round again and walked, or rather tramped, more slowly till he reached about the middle, and there stood still and glanced round him.

"Who struck my father?" Jim Foley called out, as he tucked up his cuffs; "that's what *I* want to know?"

There was no answer to the challenge, and Jim tramped up and down again, and working himself into a fury,

thrusting his clenched fists out right and left, and delivering "facers" from the shoulder in a manner truly fearful to behold.

"Who struck my father?" Jim Foley cried again, beginning to walk round and round in a circle as the crowd recoiled from his scowl, leaving the cleared space sufficiently wide for that manoeuvre. "That's what *I* want to know."

Julia Flynn and Mave Cooney looked on from the bridge, not knowing whether to be amused or frightened, and were soon joined by Jim's mother, clapping her hands and wailing, prophesying a scene of carnage.

"Who struck my father?" shouted Jim Foley, giving his sombrero a ferocious cock. "That's what *I* want to know."

A well-dressed young man, who had been sitting on the big oak tree, here stood up and looked at the redoubtable Jim Foley with a gleam of impatience rather than of anger. He was considerably under the middle height, but well-built and muscular, and evidently full of life and activity.

"Who struck my father"? cried Jim Foley again, dashing his innocent hat upon the ground and glaring at the crowd on every side. "That's what *I* want to know," he added, going through the form of turning up his cuffs, which were turned up already.

"I did!" said the young man, who had stood up from his seat on the oak tree, coming up to Jim Foley with a light spring and looking steadily into his face.

Mave Cooney held her breath, and grasped Julia Flynn by the shoulder. The whole crowd seemed spell-bound, and waited in a sort of anxious curiosity to see what would happen.

"I did," repeated the young man, moving a step nearer to Jim Foley, and looking up into his eyes. Jim Foley's bearded under-jaw dropped down, and his two elbows were raised like wings as if to ward off an expected blow.

"And," said Jim Foley, in a quavering voice, slowly

moving backwards as he spoke, "and—who—the blazes—knows—who you are?"

A derisive roar burst from the men, above which rose the clear, shrill laughter of the young girls and children standing upon Rody Flynn's timber, as Jim Foley turned upon his heel as if his challenger and the whole crew of them were beneath his notice, and strutted off the stage—not condescending even to pick up his hat, which the young man sent flying after him with a kick of his foot.

But while they were all laughing a cry was heard from the bridge, which suddenly hushed their merriment into a dead silence, and, while everyone was wondering what it meant, Julia Flynn was seen flinging her arms wildly about the neck of the young man from whom Jim Foley had turned with such withering contempt.

"'Tis Charlie—'tis Charlie Flynn," some one cried out. Whereupon exclamations of surprise and pleasure were heard all round, as Charlie Flynn's old school-fellows and playmates and neighbours pressed around to shake hands with and welcome him home. Julia hung on to his arm, and seemed afraid that in their joyous excitement they'd carry Charlie off to some unknown region where she would never see a sight of him again, or fairly pull him to pieces on the spot. And gentle Mave Cooney's lovely face grew pale and red by turns as she watched the scene from the bridge above; and as, in her nervousness, and possibly in unconscious sympathy with Julia's action, Mave grasped her brother Joe's arm just as Julia grasped Charlie's, her hands—which you could not now see, and were not as lily-white as her throat, for the simple reason that she wore gloves—trembled very much. And when, after a while Charlie Flynn made his way to the bridge, and pressed one of the gloved hands in his, a very little thing would have turned Mave's blushing smile into a burst of hysterical weeping. But the blush and the smile held their ground till she saw Rody Flynn hold out his hand to welcome Charlie home (for of course

the walk to the mountain was put off), and then Mave had to run into Julia's room, and, covering her face with her hands, burst into tears—just as Julia herself did on a certain occasion, which it is to be hoped the reader has not quite forgotten—after looking at the little farmhouse high up among the heather, through the foliage of the scarlet geraniums.

"I'm trying to persuade Mave not to go home till to-morrow," said Julia, after Charlie had finished his dinner, during which he accounted for his arrival home that day by telling them that he had met a neighbouring farmer's married daughter and her husband at the railway station, who were on their way to pay a visit to her father and mother, and the offer of a drive to within two miles of home saved me the cost of hiring a car. The farmer even wanted to send the car the whole way with him, but this proposal Charlie would not listen to, as his trunk could be sent on after him in the donkey cart, which, fortunately, was to be coming in for butter-firkins to his father's the following day. "And now, Julia added, "Joe is gone, and I can't go far with her myself, as I have to milk the cow. But I'll see you outside the street at any rate, Mave," said Julia, as she flung her blue cloak over her shoulders.

Whereupon Charlie, in the coolest manner possible, put on his hat, and without a word of explanation or apology, walked off with them. And as the three were passing over the bridge, who should be standing under the swinging sign with folded arms, left foot forward, but Jim Foley, in grandiloquent conversation with Sub-Constable Sproule. Jim wheeled round, right-about-face; and extended his right hand, to which Charlie Flynn laughingly gave a friendly shake.

"I really did not recognise you," said Jim Foley loftily; "and I was gratified to learn that you did *not* strike my father."

"It would have profoundly amazed me," observed Joe Sproule, who seemed to feel bound, *ex-officio*, to give expression to his sentiments,—“it would have

profoundly annoyed me to see so respectable a farmer's son as Mr. Flynn inaugurating his advent to his native place after an absence of some years' duration by inflicting grievous bodily injury upon so respectable a citizen as Laurence Foley."

"Licensed to sell," put in Mrs. Foley, who was standing in her own door-way, and had been a delighted listener to the grandiloquent dialogue between her son and the "well-spoken peeler," as she had somewhat irreverently designated Joe Sproule before she had learned his name. "Laurence Foley, licensed to sell," continued Mrs. Foley, with a beaming countenance. "I hope I see you well, Charlie?"

"Very well, thank you, Mrs. Foley," returned Charlie Flynn, with a raising of the eyebrows and a twinkle in his black eyes that at once reminded Joe Sproule of "Mine Host of the Cherry Tree."

"Nobody struck Laurence Foley—at least, with *malice prepense*, and with intent to inflict grievous bodily harm," said Joe Sproule. "It was that chap with the ankles, commonly called Jacky the Cobbler, who, in an ecstasy of delight at the commotion caused by the dog fight, leaped perpendicularly from one of them trees, and brought his head into violent collision with Laurence Foley's nose. I minutely investigated the circumstances, an' find such was the case. Violent collisions," added Joe Sproule severely, "are hereditary in that chap by the mother's side."

Julia laughed outright as she hurried after Mave Cooney, who had walked on without stopping; and when Charlie came up with them Julia entertained him with a history of the policeman's misadventures, including, of course, the episode of Nell the Cobbler and the new tin kittle, to which Charlie gave as much attention as could be expected under the circumstances.

"Won't you wait for Charlie?" Rody Flynn asked, as his daughter was pouring out the tea in the evening.

"What a notion I have of it," returned Julia, pushing

the loaf to him. "I haven't him in the tea-pot at all. He said he'd go as far as Corriglea bridge with Mave. But I'm as sure as if I was looking at him that he went all the way. You'll be fast asleep before Charlie walks into us to-night."

Julia was right. As Mave Cooney awoke out of her "first sleep that night, and listened to the chirp of the cricket behind the pot-hangers in the corner, she rubbed her eyes and asked herself whether the events of the evening were all a dream, or did Charlie Flynn in very reality walk up with her to her mountain home through the purple heather, "the same as always."

CHAPTER XXX.

MR. ARMSTRONG INTENDS TO GO IN AND WIN.

"Now, Mr. Armstrong, do try and avoid the stones. She was quite tender on the off fore-leg after taking up that stone in the hoof last week ;" and Ponsonby patted the yellow pony softly upon the nose.

"Yes, I'll try," returned Mr. Armstrong, as he placed his foot in the stirrup and got into the saddle with an ease and agility that would have done credit to a much younger horseman. "And now, Ponsonby," he continued, gathering up the reins, and reaching for the fishing-rod which old Gillen was waiting to hand to him, "I'll expect you to stay at your work in the garden all day instead of spending the time at Rody Flynn's."

"My goodness, Mr. Armstrong," remonstrated the man-of-all-work, "how can you expect such a thing after that letter you got this morning from America ? I never thought you could be so unreasonable. I couldn't stand all that news on my mind without telling Rody Flynn—and Charlie too. For Charlie feels a great interest in Tom Dwyer, and knows a great deal about him from the papers. He read all the particulars of that terrible battle for me the other evening, and how Tom Dwyer was promoted to be captain for his gallantry in saving the flag from being captured by the enemy when the ensign was shot down. Charlie read all that for me," Ponsonby went on, addressing space ; "so I must run out at once, and tell them about the letter."

"Well, yes," returned his master with a smile ; "you

can tell them that the arm was not amputated, as was reported in the papers, and that Tom—and that Captain Dwyer,” he added, correcting himself—“is now about quite recovered from the effects of his wounds. Tell Rody Flynn and Charlie that.”

“And that his father is very strong,” returned Ponsonby; “and that the two little girls are always talking of Corriglea.”

“Yes, yes,” said Mr. Armstrong, touching the yellow pony with his heels. And as he rode on, followed by the white greyhound, Ambrose Armstrong murmured to himself, over and over again, “always talking of Corriglea! always talking of Corriglea!”

“Let me see,” soliloquised he, letting the reins drop upon the pony’s shoulder; “one hundred and eleven pounds per annum for ever. And something over a thousand pounds in money. Poor Dora! I never thought she could be so economical. But, then, the little legacy from the old lady to whom she had been companion for so many years was a good nest egg. And to think that the poor thing should leave all to me, and that she should have such a longing to close her eyes at last in the old house at home! Dear me, how quickly the months roll by! It was this very day twelve months we laid her to rest with her mother under those elm trees, that look so fresh and green again. I’m so glad I was able to have the old house brightened up for her. And it is such a comfort to think that after all her wanderings her last days were spent in peace and quietness. She admired Alice very much,” he went on, smiling. “I was so pleased when poor Dora said one evening, ‘that girl would adorn the highest circles.’ I always thought the same myself, though I knew little about high circles, and was gratified to find my opinion confirmed by poor Dora, who saw a great deal of high life in her time. Ah! yes,” he added, with a sigh, “Alice Cormack is a splendid girl. I’ll call in after fishing to show her Tom’s letter. But she keeps up a regular correspondence with Nannie and Nellie, so I daresay

there is little in the letter she does not already know. Come, Jessie, just a little faster," he said, giving the reins a shake. And as the yellow pony broke into a livelier amble, Mr. Armstrong went on with his soliloquy. "The poor little children! always talking of Corringlea. My project looks Quixotic; but the more I revolve it in my mind the more satisfied I am that it is not at all impracticable. I scarcely think Ned Cormack would throw any obstacle in the way. But I would not hesitate to *compel* him to agree to my terms. The poor man is greatly altered—quite heart-broken indeed since he lost his little boy. He said one day to me on the bridge with a moan that I shall never forget, 'If God took all I have in the world I wouldn't complain, if he left me my little boy.' I think, however, he is beginning to feel some interest in his affairs again. He got angry when I asked him would he try to purchase his farm, and said that his son-in-law had put it out of his power. But if the purchaser gives him a lease he said he did not care. I believe Margaret has got from time to time nearly all his money. He was indifferent about it when the little boy was gone. And her mother tells me Margaret quietly assumes that Alice will never marry, and wants no money. They really expect that land and all will be theirs. But I think the poor man is beginning to see things in their true light, and won't do so great an injustice to Alice, merely because her sister is selfish and covetous, and she is the very contrary. Let me see," went on the old gentleman, assuming a look which his clever, calculating father might have worn on his way home from Corringlea the day he left his unpromising son to the tender mercies of that fine young woman, Martin Dwyer's sister, "a thousand pounds ready cash to begin with. Then the rent-charge.

. . . Why, the thing is quite possible, and, I should say, quite safe," he broke out after some minutes' thought, during which his cogitations did not seem to shape themselves into definite phrases. "My old training at the desk has not been quite thrown away. And if I

succeed," he added, becoming so excited that the yellow pony seemed electrified and broke into a canter, "if I succeed, my one earthly wish shall be gratified. The one shadow upon my peaceful life will be swept away. I shall have done some good in the world. I shall at long last have done something to clear off an old score which has long been a reproach to my conscience. Soho, Rover! Well done Jessie! We are going to go in and win."

"My goodness, Alice! is that Mr. Armstrong riding over the bridge at full gallop?" Mrs. Cormack asked, in evident astonishment. "I never saw him do that before."

"Oh!" returned Alice, looking at first startled, and then answered; "he's running a race with Rover. I thought at first the pony had run away with him."

"I hope he'll come in before he goes home," said Mrs. Cormack. "It does your father good to talk to him. In fact, he never cares to talk to anyone else."

"He talked more to me during his walk last evening than ever he did before," Alice replied. "He asked me some questions that surprised me," she went on, thoughtfully, the colour coming into her cheeks. "I thought he never troubled himself about *me*."

Mrs. Cormack sighed, but said nothing.

"I'm afraid," Alice continued, "he is displeased with Margaret. She wanted him to do something about putting his name on bills the last evening they were here."

"No wonder that his patience should be worn out," said her mother, with a shake of the head; "and now that the estate is to be sold in lots. He is angry that he is unable to purchase his own farm—and the lease just expired. It is very unpleasant to think of it. How do we know but that someone will make the purchase who will want this place for himself."

"Do you mean that we could be turned out of the house my father built himself?" Alice asked, in surprise.

"Yes," her mother replied; "such is the law. I don't wonder that your father does not think quite so badly

of the Fenians as Father Feehan does. But I'm glad to see him taking an interest in anything. For a while I was afraid his mind was completely gone."

"Nannie and Nellie," said Alice, smiling, "are all enthusiasm about these dreadful Fenians; and I think I am beginning to be infected myself, and all the more when I hear Robert and Margaret abusing them as drunken rowdies, who would run from the shadow of a policeman, and mean nothing but blustering talk."

"If that be so," returned Mrs. Cormack, quietly, "I wonder why they trouble themselves so much about them. I don't believe Tom Dwyer is a rowdy; and those young men we met marching with Charlie Flynn the last holiday were the most sober and moral young men in the whole parish. I did not see one of the Shannavats or Cravats among them. Do you remember when you used to say that Tom Dwyer had not a bit of the hero in his composition?" she asked with a smile, laying her hand at the same time upon a copy of the "New York Herald" which lay upon the work-table beside her.

"Well, I was mistaken," returned Alice, rising quickly from her chair and standing near the window. "I see Mr. Armstrong leading his pony into the stable," she added. "I have a mind to cross over Poul-na-cople and meet him. But I'll wait till he has done whipping the river, as he calls it. I never saw the orchard looking so splendid," Alice continued, pulling up the window-blind. "And it is more picturesque the old house is getting. I think I'll make another sketch, and put Mr. Armstrong and the pony in it, and send it to Nannie and Nellie. It is no wonder that they should dream about it every night, as they say in their letters."

"I sometimes fear," returned her mother, pressing her hand upon her forehead, "that I was *glad* when we got possession of it. If so, I have been well punished, for I have scarcely ever known a happy day since."

"My father said something last evening," Alice remarked, "from which I'd be almost inclined to think that he is not quite satisfied with himself about it."

"He acted very well," Mrs. Cormack replied. "He could scarcely have done better under the circumstances." But she knew little of what had passed between her husband and the landlord.

"Mrs. Bernard," she continued, "is quite grateful to him, and he is keeping the house in repair to please her, as she says she couldn't bear to think of it as a ruin. It is strange how some people's hearts take root in the spot they called 'home,' while others seem to care no more about it than about any other spot."

"I think I have thrown out a few roots," said Alice, laughing.

"Yes," returned her mother; "but Margaret has not. I really think she imagines we should sell out all and give her the money. But, of course, we could go and live with her," Mrs. Cormack added, laughing, "and drive in the carriage. That notion," she went on more seriously, "was certainly in their minds, and I think she must have hinted something of the kind to your father during the time he was so entirely crushed and helpless; and it is remembering that and other things that makes him indignant with her, now that he is beginning to awaken from his long sleep of sorrow."

Her voice was broken as she uttered these last words. And taking a little picture-book from the table—where, by her husband's order, it had been allowed to remain—the mother's tears fell upon the pages that used to so fascinate the wondering blue eyes whose light was quenched so suddenly more than two years before.

The old angler, with his rod tied up, and feeling pleasantly conscious of the weight of the basket at his back, had retraced his steps along the river bank as far as the "Pool of the Horse," when, as he was about turning from the river to cross the long meadow, he was a little startled by a rustling among the branches that overhung the place where, in the "good old times," Mr. Philip Dwyer, of Corriglea, had such a narrow escape from drowning.

"Oh, Alice!" he exclaimed, in delighted astonish-

ment, "is it you? I was just thinking of how surprised Tom Dwyer was the morning you discovered his secret."

"Mother desired me to wait for you, and not let you go home without calling in," returned Alice, a little startled and confused by his remark; for at the moment the same thought was in her own mind.

"Oh! but you don't expect *me* to venture to cross over Poul-na-cople," Mr. Armstrong replied. "And, besides, Rover and the pony are in the stable above."

"Yes, but they are in the orchard," said Alice; "and I waited till I saw you coming back."

They went up through the meadow in silence; both looking all the time at the ivied farm-house. Not a word was spoken till the orchard gate closed behind them, and then Mr. Armstrong—who only expected to see Mr. and Mrs. Cormack—exclaimed in some surprise—"Oh, you have Father Feehan here! And Mrs. and Mr. O'Keeffe."

"Yes," Alice replied; "they took us rather by surprise. And as my father was getting something done to the old house, and showed no sign of coming home, Margaret proposed to walk to the orchard. Does it not look lovely?" she asked, gazing round upon the wilderness of blossoms.

But Mr. Armstrong's eyes were fixed upon the group under the winter pear tree. Margaret sat with her father upon the rustic seat, over the back of which her husband was leaning, talking smilingly into the old man's ear. For he is really an old man now—stooped and white-haired, and dull of eye, with a heavy childish expression that contrasts painfully with the shrewd and somewhat proud and satirical smile which Ned Cormack's face was wont to wear. Mr. O'Keeffe's teeth and hands were as white, and his wife's pale gold ringlets as silky and as bright, as ever. Her face, too, was beautiful as of old, though a very close observer might detect at least a shade of "a nose on her" when she saw Mr. Armstrong and Alice approaching.

Father Feehan, rosy and fair as ever, and perhaps

a little fatter, sat a few feet in front of the rustic seat upon one of Martin Dwyer's high-backed mahogany chairs, while Mrs. Cormack—very little if at all changed—was walking backward and forward, from the winter pear to the nonpareil trees upon the soft grass.

"Is Martin Dwyer forgotten?" was the thought that occurred to Ambrose Armstrong's mind, as he contemplated this picture. "And I suppose," he mentally added, "black sheep become white under certain circumstances."

The angler, however, was greeted with smiles of welcome by everybody—the shadow of the "nose" vanishing completely from Mrs. O'Keeffe's beautiful face as she shook hands with him. There was some chat about Tom Dwyer and the laurels he had won, and about the Fenians, and what they were and what they were not. Mr. O'Keeffe remarked upon the absurdity of making captains and colonels, and even generals, of men who had never had a regular military education and training; and as for the Fenians, Mr. O'Keeffe knew for a fact, upon the authority of his friend, the eloquent and patriotic Mr. O'Flummery Funk, that "there was not a decent man amongst them."

"Do you think," Ned Cormack asked, abruptly—"do you think will Tom Dwyer ever come home?"

"Yes," Mr. Armstrong replied; "he'll come home to lay all his laurels at Alice's feet."

Mr. and Mrs. O'Keeffe and Father Feehan laughed heartily at the little pleasantry, which, though Alice herself joined in the laugh, seemed to irritate Mrs. Cormack, who stopped in the middle of one of her little walks, and said emphatically—

"There's not a man living would sooner get her."

At which Mr. and Mrs. O'Keeffe looked directly into each others eyes for fully half a minute; while the parish priest glanced at Alice's blushing face; and Mr. Armstrong looked inquiringly at Mrs. Cormack herself, who resumed her walking, apparently unconscious of the sensation she had created.

"I always liked Tom Dwyer," Ned Cormack blurted out, in the same abrupt way as if he had fallen asleep in the interval since he spoke before. "I wish Tom Dwyer would come home."

"Alice will be a nun," said Father Feehan, smiling blandly.

"If she does," returned Ned Cormack, seeming to be again roused from a nap, "if Alice becomes a nun I'll leave all I have to whatever convent she joins after her mother's death."

Again Mrs. O'Keeffe turned her head round and looked into Mr. O'Keeffe's eyes. Was it *possible* that after getting all her father's money she was not to get his land and flocks and herds as well?

"You need not be troubled about Alice," said Mrs. O'Keeffe, drawing her sister towards her and encircling her waist with her arm. "Alice knows she can always have a home with me."

"Very good," returned Ned Cormack, with more of the old shrewdness in his look than had been seen in it since the great sorrow fell with such a crushing weight upon him; "if that gentleman who had the good taste to come into my house the other day to see if it would suit him, should be the highest bidder we can all go live with you. I might be the highest bidder myself—only for *something*," he added, in a tone so like his old self that his wife stopped short again in her walk and looked at him in pleased surprise.

"I suppose you know, sir," said Mr. O'Keeffe, "that the sale has been postponed in consequence of the unsettled state of the country. This Fenianism has really thrown the country back half a century."

"I am very thankful to Fenianism," returned his father-in-law. "Maybe, if Charlie Flynn and those boys of his who can keep the step so well should be able to free Ireland with their fists—for I can't see that they have anything else to fight with—they might not be worse to us than those who rule over us at present."

"That reminds me," said Mr. Armstrong, "of the terror we poor Protestants were in at the thought of Catholic emancipation; but when it came it turned out to be a much less dreadful thing than we imagined. But I must be off," added Mr. Armstrong, taking his fishing-tackle from a bough of an apple tree upon which he had hung it. "I can leave you a few nice trout, Mrs. Cormack. But what am I to put them in?" he asked, as he shook up his basket and let them see the fish in it, with evident pride.

"Oh! we are not going to let you off so easy," she replied. "You must stay with us for the evening."

"Well, I suppose I may as well submit with a good grace," said Mr. Armstrong, as he took his rod from the tree against which it had been resting, for they had all risen to return to Rockview. "But you must let me liberate Rover; he has been a prisoner all day in the stable."

"Yes," returned Mrs. Cormack; "and Alice can ride the pony to the house. But I hope she won't gallop over the bridge as you did to-day."

"When I see Mr. Armstrong riding so gaily through the country," said Father Feehan, with a suspicion of sarcasm, "I sometimes think he is on the look out for a wife."

"Poor Martin Dwyer!" exclaimed Mr. Armstrong. "I always think of him when I am going out of this gate. To see him ride out here upon his old gray horse for the last time, holding up his head, and looking so heart-broken and so proud, thinking that he was a martyr for his country, was the saddest sight I ever beheld."

The priest walked on, and seemed no longer in any mood for bantering pleasantries. He did not even raise his eyes from the ground when Alice passed him, mounted upon the yellow pony and followed by the white greyhound.

This reminded Alice of the day when his frown took away her breath, when she went to meet him in the lawn after her return home from school. And then she

thought of the sadness she saw in Tom Dwyer's dark eyes as he bent over her, when she had returned to consciousness under the elm tree in the chapel-yard. Very often of late had Alice recalled that look, particularly when thinking of those terrible battles in which the "Irish Brigade" upheld the honour of the green flag so gallantly. She blushed and hung her head, giving the reins a little impatient shake, as she remembered that in the postscript of her last letter—when in the American paper that arrived after she had concluded her lengthy epistle she saw Tom Dwyer's name among the wounded—she had said something which, now that she knew of his safety and recovery, she would gladly recall if she could.

"How do I know," thought Alice, shaking the reins and putting the yellow pony to a quicker walk,—“how do I know whether he has ever thought of me at all?”

If Alice, at that identical moment, as she rode over Corringlea Bridge upon Ambrose Armstrong's yellow pony, could have peeped into a certain tolerably comfortable-looking room in Brooklyn, N.Y., and knew how to use her eyes with ordinary discernment, she would have at least a shrewd suspicion that Tom Dwyer did think of her now and then. In the room, which is carpeted and nicely furnished, are two wonderfully pretty little ladies—not much taller or stouter, but just a little more rounded and womanly-looking, than when we saw them last—eagerly reading a letter of six-and-twenty pages, four of which were “crossed.” They had only just returned from “work” in a “dry goods store,” where, in spite of the different colours of their hair, both customers and employees were perpetually mistaking one for the other.

All their thoughts, and words, and actions seem to be in tune with their looks, with a difference, however, which bears some analogy to that in the colour of their hair and eyes; there is a depth, as well as a softness, in the nature of her of the blue eyes and golden hair which the other does not possess. Each has a hold of the

letter, and the black eyes and the blue ones devour its contents with equal eagerness.

"What is that ye are reading?" old Martin Dwyer asks, as he places a huge key on the chimney-piece. He fills the humble office of caretaker of the store where the little girls are employed, his business being to open it in the morning and lock it up at night, in addition to posting letters and delivering light parcels through the city during the day. He would not very much care to exchange his humble employment for the most lucrative "job" in the gift of "Tammany"—unless indeed, the exchange might enable him to add sufficient to the £300 sterling safely deposited in a bank, which the Archbishop himself had assured him was not more likely to "burst up" than any other bank in the United States. People sometimes wondered, when they looked into Martin Dwyer's aged and worn face, to hear him always talking of "taking a farm"—"as if," they would say, "he expected to live for ever." But the simple old farmer would like to turn up the soil and sow the seed in the spring-time, even if he never expected to see the ripened ear. For it would be a pleasure if some one sat by his bedside and told him how the corn looked: was it free from smut? and "how many barrels to the acre" was it likely to produce? And then our old friend would think, with a smile, that when the golden harvest was falling before the sickle, the reapers, one and all, would remember him and pray, God rest his soul.

"Troubling himself about his harvest, when he should be thinking of eternity," you say. But Heaven help the man who cares nothing about the harvest he is leaving behind him.

Martin Dwyer would not be less resigned or less fit to die even if he did "cast one longing, lingering look behind" upon his beloved fields.

Rody Flynn was not only resigned but happy "after being anointed," when he was sure, and certain he'd never see another sun rise or set, the time he caught the

typhus fever staying up at night with old Dan Morris, who had caught the fever himself from nursing his daughter and six grand-children, "before one of them was strong enough to get him a drink of water."

"I didn't get a bit in the world sorry," Rody said, in reply to his friend Davy Lacy. "Instead of that I thought every minute was an hour till I'd be in Heaven. But," he added, raising his eyebrows, "I remember it crossed my mind that if God Almighty would give me leave to come back for five minutes, some time in July, just to see the potatoes in blossom—they were comin' over the ground so beautiful the last time I saw 'em,—I thought if I could get that privilege I'd feel very thankful!" And Rody Flynn's round black eyes twinkled, and his chubby face laughed all over at the childishness of such a wish. But when the melancholy shoemaker asked, did he think it showed too great a hankering after the things of this world, Rody Flynn became serious, and answered emphatically, "No"—that the first question in the Catechism was, "Who made the world?" and that the answer to that question was, "God." And Rody Flynn forthwith proceeded to illustrate his argument by a "somewhat similar case" that came under his observation "in the Queen's County." We rather lean to Rody Flynn's theology in this matter; and don't think that Martin Dwyer either expected or wished to "live for ever," because he talked very often about "taking a farm." His son remarked, however, that he never mentioned the name of Corringlea by any chance until the evening before this, upon which we find our little friends, Nannie and Nellie, reading a letter of six-and-twenty pages, quite in a flutter of excitement. It happened that two officers of the "Sixty-Ninth" dropped in to "have a talk with the captain," as they explained to Mr. Dwyer, and in the course of the talk the old farmer remarked, "I think Corringlea ought to be given back to me." Martin Dwyer was convinced that he had laid Corringlea on the altar of his country as surely as Robert Emmet laid

his head upon the block. And would it not be only right that his country should give it back again, particularly as, "if they mounted him upon a horse," he thought he could still strike a soldier's blow for old Ireland.

The captain, who was all but quite recovered from his wound, and his two blue-coated visitors laughed heartily. "But," added old Martin Dwyer, earnestly, looking straight into the three bronzed and bearded faces, "but I'd give back Ned Cormack his hundred pounds." Then Tom's dark eyes glistened, and a very little thing would have brought a couple of big tears rolling down the bronzed cheeks and over the great black beard. What a fine, simple, honest heart that old father of his had!

That was the only time Martin Dwyer was ever heard to speak of Corriglea since he waved his hand to the old house at the Cross of Tubberluce.

And now, on learning in reply to his question, as he laid the big key on the chimneypiece, that it was a letter from Alice Cormack his little daughters were reading, Martin Dwyer drew a chair to the table and desired them to "read it out."

That was just what the captain, reclining upon the sofa with his arm in a sling, wanted to say for ten minutes back, but couldn't. He managed to dexterously bring the square envelope, sliding across the table with his cane till it dropped upon the carpet, within reach of his hand. The captain looked with a gloomy indifferent expression at the superscription, and then began fanning himself absently with the square envelope. After a moment's indulgence in this exercise—inadvertently of course—he pressed the square envelope to his lips; and guessing that Nellie's black eyes had detected this automatic movement of his hand, the bronzed face became so red that the foraging-cap which lay on the chair, over the back of which his legs had been thrown before he changed his position and stretched them along the sofa, was hastily laid upon his nose—possibly for the purpose of keeping away the flies.

On hearing of the letter from Alice, Mrs. Dwyer hurried into the carpeted room through the folding doors that separated it from an uncarpeted room, in the middle of which was a stove, and a little further on a table covered with a white cloth and laid for "supper." The good woman sat down near her husband with a wondering, if not frightened, look of eager interest in her face, making a warning back-handed gesture towards Cauth Manogue, who stood in the doorway with incipient exclamations in her open mouth, which at any moment might explode and bring up Mrs. Mulloony, who occupied the basement storey, to know whether it was the police or the fire brigade were wanted. And as Nellie, having turned back to the first page, went on reading the letter, several items of news did call forth an irrepressible "O-o-eh" from Cauth Manogue, in spite of her mistress's oft-repeated warning gesture; for Mrs. Dwyer always raised her hand at the right time, and seemed to know instinctively when the explosion was coming.

"It is said," Nellie went on, reading the letter, "that Joe Cooney's match is made up with Molly Hanrahan" ("O-o-eh," spite of the warning gesture). "But poor Con is not yet over his difficulties since his imprisonment and cost of the trial."

"Only for that trial," Martin Dwyer remarked, "I'd be able to take a farm."

"So Julia Flynn—who, I am happy to say, is as bright and cheerful as ever—must draw still further upon her patience. She is in the seventh heaven since her brother Charlie came home." ("O-o-eh," in spite of the warning.) "Charlie lent £20 to Con to pay his rent. Mr. Armstrong tells me that it will be a double match, and that Charlie will give the £20 as 'boot' with Julia for Mave." . . .

Cauth—"O-o-o-o-o-och."

Her mistress, standing up with indignation flashing from her eyes—"Be off out of that, you big struppish, as you don't know how to conduct yourself like a Christian."

Cauth retires abashed behind one of the folding doors, but her head is soon visible again in the open space.

"Everyone is talking of the Fenians. You never saw anything like the change that has come over the people. Father Feehan blames Charlie Flynn for bringing it into his parish."

The captain here raises himself upon his elbow, and his dark eyes open very wide.

"I hear many discussions between Father Feehan and papa and Mr. O'Keeffe, in which Mr. Armstrong occasionally joins. Papa seems to have a leaning towards the Fenians, and says they are the only honest patriots in Ireland, and that their movement has morally elevated the people. Drunkenness and the Cravats and Shannavats really seem to have quite disappeared. Papa says the men work well and cheerfully now, and are not the sulky, discontented people they were some years ago at all. I sometimes think papa is glad to see the tables turned on Father Feehan, who is now a 'Castle priest' in the eyes of the people, while himself (the 'traitor' of the general election, you know) is looked upon as a patriot—he speaks so well of the Fenians. Father Clancy, who is becoming a little more social, and calls to see us occasionally now, says that one bad effect of the wholesale denunciations of the Fenians is that when it became necessary to denounce some scandal from the altar, the greatest reprobate really seems to think and to be regarded by his neighbours as no worse than Charlie Flynn and his comrades, who are the best young men in the parish. I was near forgetting to mention that his father was very thankful for the cheque, and said it came just at the right time, as it would enable him to pay off an arrear of rent that was 'on his mind' for the past three years."

"What cheque was that?" Martin Dwyer asked.

"A few pounds I sent him, that was due to him," his wife answered in a self-satisfied way. And seeing her husband turn round and look reproachfully at her, Mrs. Dwyer bridled up, and asked indignantly, "did

he think she'd leave poor Rody Flynn without the money that was lawfully due to him?"

"No," replied Martin Dwyer, with a puzzled look, "but why didn't you tell me that it was due, and I'd pay him when I was paying everybody?"

"Because my mind was confused," Mrs. Dwyer replied, with the look of a martyr, "and I had no one to tell me what to do or to be of the least assistance to me."

Now, the fact was that Mrs. Dwyer started in a great fright when she saw Rody Flynn standing, stick in hand, at the Cross of Tubberluce, where he had been waiting since day-break to give old Martin Dwyer "the last shake hands," for she thought Rody Flynn meant, there and then, to demand his money, and possibly heap abuse upon her into the bargain.

"Rody," said she, turning round in the car, for Martin, who was on horseback, had stopped to wave a last adieu to the old house, "never fear but I'll send you a cheque to pay that little account."

"Very well, ma'am," said Rody Flynn.

Nannie and Nellie were then too young and inexperienced to understand the matter, but they never forgot that "Very well, ma'am," and the look with which it was accompanied, and the tears that sprang into the little round black eyes. And when, after a little time, they began to glean some knowledge of business matters, they put their little heads together, and commenced saving cents and dollars till the sum total was sufficient to pay Rody Flynn for the barrel-churn and the twelve tubs, and a lot of other things which he had made for the dairy in dear old Corriglea.

Their mother was delighted, and became "confused," as she thought of all the flattering things that would be said of her in Shannaclough.

"Poor Rody Flynn," said Martin Dwyer. "'Twas too bad to have him kept so long out of his money. Go on with the letter, Nellie."

"I must tell you a funny thing Davy Lacy said the

day I brought the cheque to Rody Flynn," Nellie went on reading. "As I was going up the street the new sub-inspector, who was coming down, stepped off the pavement quite into the middle of the muddy road to let me pass. 'Well,' said Davy Lacy, who, as usual, was leaning on the door, 'that's a sort of politeness I can't understand—treating a lady as if she was a dog after coming out of the water and going to shake herself.'"

A clear laugh, but with a shade of "the deep sigh of sadness" in it, from under the foraging cap on the sofa, here interrupted the reading of the letter for a moment, and tended to show that Captain Dwyer was not asleep, notwithstanding the perfect stillness maintained by him for several minutes.

Nellie went on reading the letter, which told them of the little convent school, and the library, and Mr. Armstrong and his new pony, and how Ponsonby was continuing quite a model gardener, and boasted of being able to beat Rody Flynn's early potatoes and cabbages, and, in fact, everything about which the twin-sisters wished to hear.

"God bless Alice," said Nannie, when the reading of the letter was concluded. "I think I'd die only for her letters. But here is a postscript," she added, taking up a half sheet of notepaper which had escaped Nellie's notice.

"Oh! my dearest Nannie and Nellie," the postscript began, "I don't know whether I ought to send you my foolish scribbling at all, which I had just put into the envelope when I got the paper with an account of that dreadful battle in which so many of our countrymen have fallen so gloriously. My heart swelled with pride when I read of Tom's gallantry in recapturing the green flag, and crying out, 'One more charge for the honour of old Ireland!' I actually thought I heard his voice and saw the flash of his eye as he rushed on to victory. But my heart sank when I saw his name in the list of the wounded. Thank God it was not in the other list, the reading of which must have brought anguish and

despair to so many Irish hearts. But I tremble to think that his wounds may be dangerous—even mortal. My poor children! how greatly you have suffered! On my knees I pray that your noble brother may soon be restored to you, and that your trouble will soon be over. After all, I believe I'll send the letter, as I know how you long to hear everything about your old friends at home. I'll try to hope for the best. It so frets me to think that Tom went away without bidding me good-bye. Yet, when I reason with myself about it, something tells me that it was neither forgetfulness nor indifference that made him do so; for I am sure he was very fond of us all. Good-bye again, poor little Nannie and Nellie; and I wish to God I could look forward to the day when I'd see you both home again at Corringlea."

Nannie sobbed aloud as she read the concluding sentence; while the bronzed and bearded soldier leaped from the sofa and rushed out of the room, to the evident consternation of his mother, who was too startled to find breath to tell him that supper would be on the table in ten minutes, or even to reprimand Cauth Manogue for the shout with which she greeted his unexpected appearance at the other side of the folding doors.

If Alice Cormack could have seen all this, she would scarcely have asked herself whether Tom Dwyer "ever thought of her at all," as she rode over Corringlea bridge upon Ambrose Armstrong's yellow pony, hiding her flushed cheek with her broad straw hat, even as if the white greyhound could guess the thought that was at that moment in her heart.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE FENIAN EXCITEMENT AT ITS HEIGHT—THE SHERIFF'S OFFICER THINKS THAT SOMETHING MUST BE UP, AND CON COONEY DETERMINES TO BE A MAN—JULIA FLYNN PAYS AN UNEXPECTED VISIT TO ROCKVIEW—A POLICE SURPRISE—ALICE SEES A LIGHT IN THE OLD IVIED FARM-HOUSE, AND TURNS TOM DWYER'S SECRET TO GOOD ACCOUNT.

THE "Fenian excitement" was at its height, yet—so far as overt-acts either of an insurrectionary or a "repressive" character was concerned—things looked very quiet within the circle of hills that shut out the rest of the world from the parish of Shannaclough. There was an occasional quiet cricket match, which fashionable game was introduced by Charlie Flynn after his return home, having the advantage—unlike the old game of hurling, which had come to be regarded as little short of open rebellion—of being a thoroughly loyal and respectable pastime, in which even the new sub-inspector took an interest, and consequently against which Father Feehan would not be likely to speak from the altar.

There was, however, "more extensive night patrolling" than our friend Sub-Constable Sproule had ever had experienced before—as he informed his father-in-law with a groan and an expression of countenance that reminded the sheriff's officer of the three Glenmoynan pigs; which the "readin' man" and his friend the military-looking acting-constable so obligingly took charge of, and safely lodged in the pound for him even, as he was wont to remind them, before he had the

pleasure of making their acquaintance. But Joe Sproule was careful to acknowledge that the bodily fatigue which he had to undergo was not aggravated by the "mental pain of mind" attendant upon still-hunting and party riots in Ulster, and the "Threes" and the "Fours" at Cappawhite, and which, the sub-constable solemnly added, "made pigs intolerable." Civilians, he assured his father-in-law, were becoming civilised, and if his career as a policeman were *now* commencing, he saw every reason to believe that "in all human probability" he'd carry his front teeth to the grave with him.

Many months had elapsed since he heard the human voice mimicing the goat; and the insulting lyric which Phœbus in his ire had inspired the late Darby Ryan of Bansha to compose was all but extinct, "both vocally and," he added, with unctuous complacency, "instrumentally," and only heard at rare intervals, and "in the shape of intermittent whistling" after nightfall from the lips of such "unpromising juveniles as the chap with the ankles."

"But how will it be," his father-in-law asked, "if 'tis goin' to be regular war? an' if 'tis true that the country is swarmin' with Irish-American officers, and that ship-loads of rifles are expected every day?"

"That's a disagreeable feature to contemplate," returned Joe Sproule, gloomily; "but, as you say yourself, '*necessitas non habet lex*.'"

"D—n you," exclaimed Murty Magrath angrily; "I did not say *lex*. I said *legem*."

"And what about *vox populi suprema*?" the sub-constable asked, glancing at his wife, who looked miserable at seeing him snubbed, but brightened up again on observing his triumphant manner of putting the question.

"Ah!" returned Murty Magrath, rubbing his shoulder with a grimace, "'tis aisy to see that Lilly's grammar was never whaled into *you* . . . But is there any-thing special since?"

"Well, yes," Joe Sproule answered, somewhat hesitatingly; "there's special orders in reference to a person supposed to answer the description of one of those officers you are after referring to. But we can get no clue. It is not true that Charlie Flynn is to be arrested, so far as present orders go. An' as Jim Foley has given up his revolvers an' taken the oath of allegiance, an' put away that suspicious hat, an' shaved off his beard, an' now appears in the guise of an ordinary citizen—there's no danger of *him*. But there's an important stranger, of whom we can scarcely get a trace. 'Twas a mistake to remove Mr. O'Keeffe from this district, and send a stranger in his place. Not," Sub-Constable Sproule added, consequentially, "but that I myself am fully competent, as he has already had opportunities of observin', to give him all necessary local information. But Mr. O'Keeffe had facilities that the present officer has not. He could utilise his consanguinity to the parish priest in many ways. I was reminded of this just now when I saw his brother talkin' to the sub-inspector who accompanied him to the priest's house. It at once occurred to me that it was a mistake on the part of the executive to transfer Sub-Inspector O'Keeffe to Ballymackbotherem—a most undesirable station, where he must take out a shootin' licence."

"That remark about the priest has a good deal in it," Murty Magrath remarked. "You're improving."

"Yes," returned Sub-Constable Sproule, trying to seem unconscious of his wife's look of delight and admiration; "an' that late order, that we are to keep aloof from social intercourse with the civilians, will work badly too. If we could perambulate among the population in a social way, as used to be the custom, an' talk to the women an' children without excitin' suspicion, we wouldn't be like a certain historical personage, with five-and-thirty men—I may say five-and-forty, when the Ballinsoggarth an' Gurthnaboher men form a junction with us—marchin' up the hill an' then marchin'

down again as we are, without gettin' some trace of the whereabouts of this mysterious stranger. We paid a domiciliary visit to Con Cooney last night,—devil's work descendin' through the rocks by the strugglin' moonbeam's misty light."

"Con Cooney has nothing to do with the business," said Murty Magrath. "But Joe is the biggest fool of 'em all."

"Are you there, Sproule?" shouted a voice from the street door.

"Yes," the sub-constable answered, turning round in his chair with a jerk, and staring blankly in the direction of the invisible speaker, who had shouted through the closed door.

"You're wanted in a hurry," returned the voice, which Joe Sproule had now recognised as that of the orderly.

"This is equally unpleasant and unanticipated," muttered the sub-constable, rising from his chair and buttoning up his tunic. "I thought I had a couple of hours to devote to the domestic affections. Fanny, my dear, reserve the rashers for happier auspices." And Sub-Constable Sproule marched off to the barracks, looking every inch a hero.

"As for reserving the rashers," the sheriff's officer remarked, lifting his chin and getting his fingers between his long neck and the high white cravat, "I can't agree to that, so far as my own share of 'em is concerned. But don't put down the pan," he said, addressing his daughter, who stood upon the hearth with that inspiring utensil in her hand, looking very blank and disappointed at her husband's vacant chair; "don't put down the pan till I come in. I'll just walk out to see what's up,"

He had scarcely taken his stand under Larry Foley's swinging sign when he saw his son-in-law and Acting-Constable Finucane marching up the street in the direction of Glenmoynan and Gurthnaboher. And immediately after a score or more police, under the

command of the sub-inspector, passed at double-quick over the bridge, taking the direct road to the mountain.

"Yes," thought the sheriff's officer; "Joe and Finucane are gone with orders to Ballinsoggart and Gurthnaboher. They'll meet the others at the mountain. I wonder is there anything in this visit to Con Cooney—who is no more a Fenian than I am. He might be flattered into joining the Ribbonmen, if there is anything of that sort about here—his head was so turned by all the cheering he got after being acquitted. Be d——d," continued Murty Magrath, with a cynical grin, "I think he was nearly persuaded that he killed the landlord. But Con don't understand their patriotism and nonsense. He's not like that poor fool Joe, who'd think it a mighty grand thing to swing from the gallows, or be riddled with rifle bullets for the sake of his country. I thought these Fenians were all d——d humbugs like my worthy friend here, who, as Sproule says, appears now in the guise of an ordinary citizen. But it seems the fellows are in earnest, and more d——d asses they are. That Charlie Flynn is a determined little divil," Murty Magrath went on, pulling at his cravat. "When he was advised to make off, he said he couldn't understand skedaddling, and that they'd find him in the workshop when they wanted him. The difference between the father and son is curious, for they are really as like one another as two peas. But while Rody confines himself to bad legs and the king's evil, the divil a less will satisfy Charlie than healing the wounds of his country. And there is that poor, pale, sickly fellow, young Davy Lacy, and he's as ready and willing to dangle or be run through the body as the best of 'em. I remark," he continued, with an amused expression of countenance, "that consumptiveness has a close affinity to religion and rebellion in Ireland."

"'Tis curious, too," added the sheriff's officer, with another cynical grin, "that every d——d idiot who went out to fight for the Pope is now conspiring against

the Queen in defiance of priests and bishops. We're a very peculiar people in Ireland—good luck to us."

"'Tis a fine moonlight night, glory be to God," Mrs. Foley remarked, unconsciously interrupting the bailiff's soliloquy, as she came to the shop door and looked at the moon just peeping over the mountain. Mrs. Foley felt and looked comfortable and in good humour after a cup of tea by the fireside. "Is that Murty Magrath?" she asked, moving a step nearer the threshold to get a fuller view of the tall figure outside the door.

"Yes, Mrs. Foley," he replied. "I like to see the moon rising over the mountain out between them two poplar trees. There's such a beautiful view from the spot."

"War them the peelers that passed?" Mrs. Foley asked; "they started very early to-night. Poor Jim gets very nervous when he hears 'em marchin' that way. He's very unaisy since he heard Con Cooney's house was searched, as he sent Mave a song in his own handwritin' that he's afeard might get him into trouble."

"Faith, an' little use for him to be sendin' songs to Mave Cooney," Nell the Cobbler remarked, pushing past Mrs. Foley into the shop. "Here," she continued, throwing some coppers on the counter, "give me a haporth uv coffee an' a pinnorth uv sugar. An' put two little rousers in this," she added, extracting the cork from a small bottle with her teeth.

"He turned to Mave when he saw Con and Julia," Nell the Cobbler proceeded, laying her bottle on the counter. "But b' my word I think Charlie 'll have Mave, for at this blessed minute she's filling out his father's tay for him. An' a fine handsome girl Mave Cooney is," Nell added warmly; "but she's too shy."

"How dar' you talk of my son in that way?" exclaimed Mrs. Foley, tossing the packages of coffee and sugar upon the counter. "Remember, my good woman," she added with dignity, as she carefully poured

two half glasses of whiskey into Nell's bottle, "remember that James Foley is son an' heir of Laurence Foley, licensed to sell."

"I thought," Murty Magrath interrupted, apparently with a view to prevent hostilities, "I thought I met Mave Cooney about an hour ago in the jennet's car on her way home."

"If you did she turned back again," Nell the Cobbler answered, "for she's above at Rody's now. I went in to Julia for a drop uv milk for the coffey, but Julia wasn't there, an' her father tould Mave to get the milk for me."

"Well, honest woman," said Mrs. Foley, "keep a civil tongue in your head, an' don't talk about my son James Foley as if he belonged to the lower order. There's no fear of Jim," she continued, when her customer had left the shop, screwing her lips to one side, and winking with her left eye at Murty Magrath as she passed him at the door. "There's no fear of Jim since he shaved himself. But the people are all surprised to hear that Con Cooney's house was searched, as it was thought he was never that soart uv a man at all. I overheard wan uv the lads sayin' wan day that Con Cooney was a clodhopper that nothin' could put sperit into."

This really was Charlie Flynn's opinion of his sister's intended husband and Mave Cooney's brother. He had long given up the attempt in despair to make anything of Con. But a few weeks before the little house on the mountain was honoured by a visit from the police, Con Cooney walked into the cooper's workshop, and, tapping Charlie on the shoulder, beckoned him into the little room, which was sometimes humorously called the "dispensary."

"What is it?" Charlie asked carelessly, not expecting to hear anything particularly interesting from Con Cooney.

"Do what you like with me now," Con replied, solemnly.

"Do you know what you're sayin'?" Charlie Flynn asked with a frown.

"Yes; I know what I'm sayin', and what it may cost me," was the deliberate reply. "I'm a different man from what I was altogether. I feel the same as yourself now."

"Explain to me," said Charlie, looking fixedly into Con Cooney's handsome face, which, he was not sorry to see, was intensely pale.

"I was sellin' my lambs in Ballycairn on Thursday," Con Cooney answered, "an' I happened to be up near the railway when poor Daly was brought in, after gettin' his twinty years, to be sent off to England. An' when I saw the handcuffs on him, an' how pale, weak, an' small he was, an' all the fixed bayonets an' drawn sabres an' horses prancin' around him, a change came over me on the spot. An' now," he added, trembling with excitement, "I'd give all the world to be face to face with them sojers, to shed the last drop of my blood for Ireland. You called me a slave wan day in this room, Charlie," he went on, in a husky voice, "an' you wor right. I *was* a slave; I never felt like a man. You despised me, an' I think if Julia didn't despise me, she was sorry for me. But I tell you I'm a different man now. I waited for two days to try to get over the feeling that came like a new heart into my body when I looked into that handcuffed prisoner's face. I tell you," burst out the athletic mountaineer, the blood rushing back into his face, "I tell you I *must* do something if anything is to be done." And grasping a tin vessel that stood on the table near him, he crushed it in his huge hand as if it were an eggshell.

"That will do," said Charlie Flynn, after pausing for a minute, "I can understand you."

And Con Cooney was forthwith admitted a member of the I. R. B. So zealous a recruit indeed did he become, that forgetting Charlie Flynn's warning that he should have nothing to say to drunkards or to "party

mien," he tried to enlist the leader of one of the two rival factions known as Cravats and Shannavats. The great fighting man, who was a great friend of Con's, said he'd "think about it." Next morning he paid a visit to another good friend of his, the magistrate, who always let him off with "one shilling or twenty-four hours." And the next night Con Cooney's house was searched for arms and "treasonable documents," greatly to the surprise of the sheriff's officer, who, of course, knew nothing of Con Cooney's sudden conversion to "Fenianism" by the mere sight of a treason-felony convict, handcuffed and guarded by horse, foot and artillery.

"Now," thought Murty Magrath as he walked out of the public-house with his hands under his coat-tails, standing irresolute for a moment upon the bridge, as he wavered between returning at once to his share of the rashers or proceeding further in his endeavour to learn what was "up"—"now it must be that what really brought them to Con Cooney's was something connected with this suspicious stranger. 'Tis just the place *he'd* be likely to face to if he be such a goose as to join these madmen and come over. And what could bring Con's sister back to Rody Flynn's? I'm sure I passed her near the mill a while ago. I'll walk up and see did that *baurshough* invent the story to take a rise out of Peg Foley."

But when the sheriff's officer dropped in to Rody Flynn's with his "God save all here," there was Mave Cooney sitting before the fire of chips and looking as handsome and innocent and as much at home as if her gentle eyes were looking into the turf fire in her mountain home. He was, however, too discreet to ask any questions, and soon took his leave, scratching his head with a puzzled look, and muttering to himself that there must be "something in it;" and it could not be the fear that the police were going to pay a second visit to Con Cooney, for Mave must have returned to the cooper's long before the police marched off in the direction of the mountains.

As, thus cogitating, the sheriff's officer was slowly retracing his steps to his own house, a horseman rode over the bridge, and, after going on straight for a couple of hundred yards, suddenly wheeled round, and on getting back to the cross, took the road to the mountain.

"There's nothing but puzzles to-night," said the sheriff's officer. "There must be something in *that*, too. And," he added, suddenly standing still, and pressing the top of his forefinger against his temple, "didn't Sproule say he was talking to the officer just before he came in? Now, he was on his way home, it was plain, when something made him change his mind. No danger now that his horse will be seized while he has the father-in-law to stand to him. I'm lonesome after poor Sloane. I have no one to laugh at since he went away. But that mistaken identity business settled him. But I'll go and have a little music," added Murty Magrath, resuming his walk. "A turn on the frying-pan will have a calming effect upon my mind, and Sproule will have all the news for me to-morrow."

* * * * *

The jennet's car which Murty Magrath saw pass at the mill stopped at Corriglea Bridge.

"Now, Jemmy," said Julia Flynn, "go on home and tell Mrs. Cooney that I have kept Mave in spite of her, and that I'll explain all to her to-morrow."

The boy drove on, and Julia walked to the stile, with the intention of crossing the Long Meadow to the old farmhouse at the foot of the mountain.

"I know I'm too early," she thought, stopping, with her hand upon the stile.

"But I thought it best to come in the car with Mave's cloak on me, for fear any notice might be taken. And now I'm afeard to be seen about the place, as I might be searched. 'Twas very unlucky that it did not come before Charlie went out. But he warned me to bring it myself if it came after he was gone. I have the password; but he won't be there for another hour, and

what am I best do? Merciful heaven!" she exclaimed, under her breath, "I hear the peelers coming." She hastily got over the stile and concealed herself behind a bush on the bank of the river. As the measured tramp came nearer and nearer, Julia Flynn held her breath, and making the sign of the Cross, prayed fervently to the Virgin that she might escape discovery.

"Halt!"

Julia Flynn nearly fainted as the measured tramp suddenly stopped. Could it be that she had been seen?

She dared not raise her eyes to the bridge above her; and even, ostrich-like, foolishly covered her face with her hands, and pushed her head into the bush under which she was crouching.

The silence was broken by the sound of other footsteps coming along the mountain road; and Julia soon heard the command to halt given again, and it was evident another party had come up to the bridge from that side.

She heard a voice ask some question, the purport of which she did not catch; but the reply to which caused Julia Flynn's heart to give a great bound.

"All right," said a voice from near the stile behind the grove.

A great pride and joy thrilled through Julia Flynn's heart as she listened. It was not because she now knew that the marchers were not the police. But the voice was Con Cooney's! She so worshipped her brother Charlie, and so wholly sympathised with him, that it pained and humiliated her to think that the man to whom she had given her heart had not a particle of Charlie's enthusiasm in the cause of his country. And here he was now at the head of the mountain-foot boys, as good a rebel as the best of them! "Thank God, Charlie would never again speak or think contemptuously of Con."

Before Julia had been able to collect her senses sufficiently to decide upon any definite course of action by which her discovery that the parties on the road were friends and not enemies might be utilised, the measured

tramp was resumed ; and when she looked up she saw a pretty long line of men, four deep, marching straight for the mountain.

"I'm afraid of my life to stay here," thought Julia. "And I'm more afraid to be caught about the house, for fear anything might be suspected. I declare," she added, brightening up, as her attention was attracted by a light in the windows of Rockview House, "I'll go in to see Miss Alice, and tell her I was going up to Mrs. Cooney's and changed my mind, and that I was so near the house I said to myself I'd go in and get her to play a few tunes on the piano for me. Sure 'tis often she asked me to come over ; and no one will suspect anything. I'm very glad I thought of it."

Nearly an hour later Alice Cormack was standing at one of the drawing-room windows, while Julia Flynn was tenderly touching the keys of the piano.

"I declare, Julia," said Alice, as she raised the window-blind, "you are wonderful. 'Tis a sin that you were not taught music. But, my goodness!" she continued, in evident amazement, "what can it mean? There must be somebody in Martin Dwyer's house, for I saw a gleam of light quite distinctly from the parlour window, as if the shutters were opened for a moment."

"Oh! Miss Alice," returned Julia, rising hastily, "I have delayed too long ; I must be off at once."

"'Tis not so late as you think," said Alice, "and the night will be getting brighter. But what on earth can be the meaning of that light?"

"I suppose it was the moon, Miss," returned Julia, with affected indifference.

"It couldn't be the moon," said Alice, "for tishn't showing on the front of the house at all. One of the servants told me she saw lights there a few nights ago, but I didn't mind her."

"Let me go, Miss Alice," said Julia a little anxiously. "I forgot something I had to do, and I must be off."

"But someone must see you a part of the way," returned Alice. "I'll ask mamma what we ought to do."

"Oh, no! Miss," Julia exclaimed, catching at Alice's dress to stop her. "I'd rather go by myself; I'm not a bit afraid." She spoke so hurriedly and earnestly that Alice turned round quickly and looked at her in surprise. As the two girls stood looking into each others eyes, a knock was heard at the hall-door. As they listened they heard the sound of feet upon the gravel outside, and, glancing through the window, the blind of which Alice had raised, they saw that several men were drawn up in line just outside the wire fence that protected the flowers from the sheep and cattle.

"Oh! Miss Alice," Julia cried, grasping Alice by the arm; "they're the police!"

"Yes," said Alice, more calmly; "I can see their bayonets now. It reminds me of the night Tom Dwyer was arrested. But what can they want now?"

Julia Flynn covered her face with her hands and uttered a low wail. Alice, holding the door partially opened, saw the sub-inspector talking to her father.

"Are you sure, sir," Ned Cormack asked in a firm voice, "that you have orders or authority to search my house?"

"Yes, sir," was the reply; "and, I assure you, I regard the duty as a very unpleasant one."

"Very well," returned Mr. Cormack; "I suppose I cannot prevent you. But you certainly have taken me by surprise, for I never imagined that I was looked upon as a disaffected person. I hope my wife and daughter will be spared unnecessary insult." Here the sound of a horse's hoofs were heard approaching the house at a fast trot; and in a moment Mr. Robert O'Keeffe rushed into the hall.

"This is a mistake," he said, with an angry look at the officer.

"How?" returned the sub-inspector, with a stare of astonishment. "Is not this Mr. Cormack's, of Corriglea?"

"This is *Rockview*," Mr. O'Keeffe replied, with

emphasis. "Corriglea is the house on the opposite side of the river," and he indicated the direction with his gloved hand.

"Oh! Miss Alice, all is lost!" exclaimed Julia Flynn, in a whisper, when the officer had hastily withdrawn. "He's betrayed."

"Tell me what you mean," returned Alice, a great light coming into her dark eyes.

"Yes; I'll tell you," Julia answered, as if impelled to speak by something she saw in Alice's face. "'Tis Tom Dwyer. He's in the old house at this moment. I came with a letter that arrived in the evening, which I was told it was of vital importance should be delivered to him before ten o'clock to-night. I was over too early; and it was to avoid suspicion I came in."

She clasped her hands in helpless despair as she spoke, and dropped upon a chair as if her limbs had lost the power to support her standing.

"Where is the letter?" Alice asked in a voice of suppressed energy.

"'Tis in that little box," returned Julia, pointing to the chimneypiece, for she had sufficient presence of mind to drop the letter into the box, when she thought it was herself the police were in search of. "But I don't know whether it would be right or not to burn it."

Alice sprang to the chimneypiece, and thrust the letter into her bosom, saying, to Julia's amazement, "I'll deliver it and save him."

"Do you think you could before they reach the house?" Julia Flynn asked, springing to her feet.

"Yes," Alice replied, throwing up the window, and preparing to spring out into the lawn.

"Throw this cloak over you," Julia replied; "and if anyone stops you, or asks you a question, say 'What time is it?'"

"Is that you, Julia?" Mr. Robert O'Keeffe asked, showing her his white teeth. "I declare I did not know you. I thought Miss Alice was here."

Julia made no reply, and Mr. O'Keeffe walked up

and down the carpeted floor, humming a tune for a moment or two. He then glanced at his watch and flung himself impatiently down upon the low chair, in which his beautiful wife used to look to so great advantage. Julia Flynn, in spite of her anxiety, was beginning to be conscious of the awkwardness of her position, when, to her relief, Mrs. Cormack entered the drawingroom.

"Where is Alice?" she asked, looking round the room.

"She's gone out, ma'am," Julia Flynn answered, in embarrassment.

"Out," returned Mrs. Cormack. "When did she go out?"

"A few minutes ago, ma'am," Julia replied, with increasing embarrassment.

"Did she say where she was going?" Mrs. Cormack asked. "Was it to get anything for you in the garden?"

"How long those fellows have taken to go to the bridge," said Mr. O'Keeffe, walking to the open window. "They are only passing over the bridge now. But why is the window raised?"

"Miss Alice raised it, sir," Julia replied, as if she felt the explanation necessary.

"I suppose it was through the window she went out," Mrs. Cormack remarked quietly, as if there was nothing very remarkable in Alice's taking the shortest way to the garden.

But Mr. O'Keeffe turned quickly upon his heel and looked scrutinisingly into Julia Flynn's face.

"Yes, ma'am," Julia replied; "Miss Alice went out through the window."

"By heaven, she has eloped with him!" muttered Mr. O'Keeffe under his breath, as he rushed out into the hall and put on his hat.

CHAPTER XXXII.

ALICE CORMACK AND JULIA FLYNN PLAY THE PART OF
HEROINES IN A LITTLE ROMANCE—JOE SPROULE IS
PROMOTED, AND MR. ROBERT O'KEEFFE APPOINTED
TO THE COMMISSION OF THE PEACE.

"GIVE me the word," said Charlie Flynn, "and I'll engage to have between forty and fifty rifles and bayonets in a quarter of an hour. The men are so posted below the grove that we'll have them caught in a trap when they pass the turn of the road. Such a chance may never come again. It would be a good beginning. For God's sake," he pleaded, "give us the word."

"I wish I could, Charlie," was the reply. "'Tis, as you say, a rare chance—though in a very small way. I'd like to strike the first blow in that very spot. But I must obey orders myself. And this is positive," the speaker added, looking at the letter he held in his hand with an expression of intense sorrow. "Something must have gone wrong," he went on. "Get the boys to their homes as quietly as possible, and let them go on as before, and wait for further orders."

"'Twont be easy to keep things right if something is not done," returned Charlie Flynn. "The boys will lose heart."

"That's the worst of it," was the reply. "There's a great spirit in the country. I could not have believed that such numbers could be found to face any odds if they only got a chance. But we want perseverance, Charlie."

"Well, I'll be off and do what you order," said Charlie

Flynn, gloomily. "But don't stay here more than ten or even five minutes unless you want to be arrested. The police," he added, turning back from the kitchen door, "are just passing the bridge."

"All right, Charlie," was the reply. "Good night. I just want to burn these papers. Do you think the doctor and his friend are in any danger?"

"No," said Charlie; "they're gone the other road, and they'd never be suspected in any case. 'Twas a mercy we got that warning. I wouldn't wish for anything that Mr. — was seen here, or the doctor either. Lord!" thought Charlie Flynn as he left the old farmhouse. "What a sensation it would cause if it was known that we had the son of a Protestant landlord and a professional man at the meeting. But, by St. Bride of Kildare!" he added, springing over the wall into the orchard, "if we were only once in the field, and after striking one good blow that would show that we were determined to do or die, we'd have plenty of the descendants of the volunteers of eighty-two with us, as well as young Mr. —."

"Is that Charlie Flynn?"

Charlie started as he heard those words in a woman's voice, and, looking towards the rustic seat, he was just able to distinguish a female figure standing in the shade of one of the apple trees.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed, as the speaker advanced into the moonlight, "is it Miss Cormack?"

"Yes," Alice replied; "it was I brought the letter. I thought to get home without being recognised. But I am so anxious to see him out of danger, I have waited here till I'd be sure he was gone. Perhaps there is some mistake? The person Julia mentioned was not one of those I saw leaving the house?"

"'Tis all right, Miss," Charlie replied, recovering from his surprise. "I'm proud to think that it was you that saved him. Though only for that letter," he added, thoughtfully, "there's no knowing how things might turn out. I'll run back and tell him you are here, Miss."

"Oh! not for the world, Charlie!" Alice exclaimed,

extending her hand, as if she would have held him by force if he attempted to return to the house. "I only want to be sure that he is safe, and that he knows the police are coming to the house."

"Yes; he understands all, Miss," said Charlie. "I see now how you escaped being recognised. That's Mave Cooney's cloak; and when you gave the password we were all sure it was Mave. But I must be off, Miss, as it might not do to have the police reach the hollow before I get to the grove."

Alice Cormack's heart beat quick as she stood there alone in the old orchard, wondering why Tom Dwyer remained so long in the farm-house, which, in a few minutes more, she knew would be surrounded by the police. Could it be possible that, notwithstanding Charlie Flynn's assurance to the contrary, he was not really made aware of his danger? Why should she hesitate to repeat the warning she had before given to the sentinel that stood outside the door—but who was now gone with all the rest? His liberty, his very life, was imperilled.

But then the foolish thought presented itself—that he had gone away without bidding her good-bye; that, perhaps, he never thought of her or cared for her at all; and why should she force herself, as it were, upon his attention? Then memory brought back with strange vividness that look in Tom Dwyer's dark eyes when he bent over her as she returned to consciousness in Shannacloagh chapel-yard. With a hurried step Alice glided over the soft grass, and opening the wooden gate, ran across the yard towards the partially open door of the old ivy-clad house; when, before she had come quite opposite the door, to her amazement she saw it close, and heard the bolts drawn inside. For an instant she stood still, quite bewildered, and not knowing what to do or to think. Was he really ignorant of his danger? Or could it possibly be that he had taken the desperate resolution to barricade the old house and hold it single-handed against the armed force, which she fancied were

even nearer than they could be, for seconds seemed minutes to her since Julia Flynn told her that Tom Dwyer was at Corriglea.

She ran to the door and knocked with her knuckles upon the weather-dried panel; but she listened in vain for any response. She then went to the parlour window, in which she had seen the light, and tapped upon one of the panes. All was silence inside.

"Tom," she called out, "it is I. It is Alice Cormack, For God sake make your escape. The police will be here in a minute or two. Don't be a madman," she went on. "If you act like a desperado you will only injure the cause you wish to serve. I know you are within," she pleaded, with her face close to the window, "and I beg of you for the sake of old times to do what I ask you. It was I brought you the letter, and gave the warning that the police were coming; and won't you leave me the satisfaction of thinking that I have done something for you—for Ireland," she added, her heart, as she uttered the last word, swelling with an enthusiasm which brought the tears to her eyes. But the old house remained as silent as the tomb.

"Oh, Tom," she broke out after a moment's listening, "I never thought you would treat me in this way. I am sure you hear me," she went on. "I am sure you know that it is Alice Cormack who is speaking to you."

"Alice!" repeated a deep voice behind her. "Am I dreaming, or am I mad?"

She turned round with a start of terror, which was scarcely allayed by the sight of the bronzed face and flowing dark beard that met her gaze. But the eyes!—the eyes were the same, and with the same look in them that haunted her memory ever since that Sunday when she was carried senseless out of the chapel.

"Oh! I thought you had bolted the door inside," she said hurriedly.

"Yes," he replied; "but I got out of the bedroom window into the orchard. I was never so bewildered as when I heard you calling my name."

"Well, go," she said. "Let me be sure that you are safe. Good-bye—shake hands with me, Tom. You must not leave Corringlea a second time as you did before." She smiled as she held out her hand, which Tom Dwyer clasped reverently in his, as he said in a choking voice:—

"Good-bye, Alice; and God bless you for ever." He turned away, and had moved a pace or two towards the orchard gate, when he stopped, and said, "But I can't leave you here alone; I must see you home. How do I know but that some of these men might insult you."

"Oh! there is no danger of that," said Alice. "I'll return as I came, by Poul-na-copple. You see what use I have been able to make of your secret," she added, more cheerfully.

"I'll see you to the gate of the long meadow, at any rate," said Tom Dwyer. "I little thought five minutes ago we'd ever again say good-bye at that gate." But the good-bye—at least the particular good-bye which Tom Dwyer so confidently counted upon at that moment—was never spoken.

They had crossed the farm-yard and the road without speaking. He opened the wooden gate and Alice passed into the meadow. Then the gate closed softly, and Tom Dwyer rested his elbow upon the top bar. Alice gave him her slender hand again; and, as if impelled by that look in the dark eyes to which allusion has been already made, held her cheek towards him to be kissed.

But a noise behind him caused Tom Dwyer to turn quickly round. Alice felt as if he had flung her hand from him; and in a second he had drawn and fired his revolver. His hand, however, was struck up, and the bullet whizzed through the elm tree above his head. And as the power of seeing came back to her eyes—for objects for a moment seemed to blend and mingle, and then vanish from her sight—Alice saw Tom Dwyer surrounded and overpowered by a number of policemen, whose fixed bayonets flashed brightly in the moonlight.

She was conscious that a short altercation had taken place between two of the policemen, and then the party

marched off quickly with their prisoner. She was too stunned to fully realise what had occurred, and with her forehead resting against the gate, was trying to recall her scattered senses, when she was startled by the sound of a man's voice on the opposite side of the hedge.

"*Nemo mortalium*," began the voice, "as my father-in-law says. But, mark my word, Finucane, you an' I have done the wise thing to-night in strictly obeyin' orders. An', *vice versa*, Stiggins has put his foot in it."

"He was too much afraid of an attack from the house or from the orchard," was the reply. "And I don't want to conceal the fact that I feel uncomfortable myself standing here."

"We got the positive order," returned the other, "to remain here under cover until the main body came up. In movin' forward to meet the main body Stiggins has acted upon his own discretion. But you an' I stand upon a rock. My V's were never more vividly conspicuous to my mental optics than at the present instant."

Alice, really alarmed, hastily withdrew from the gate, and, after a moment's bewildered thought, hurried back through the meadow to the river-bank. On reaching Poul-na-copple all fears on her own account vanished. She could cross the river as easily as if there was a foot-bridge over the Pool of the Horse; and there was the house so near that she could see the lamp on the drawing-room table through the still open window. But poor Tom Dwyer! What was to be his fate? Turning her eyes towards the mountain road she was surprised, but not in the least alarmed, to see a man's figure coming down the moonlit meadow directly to where she was standing, with the fleetness of a greyhound.

"I could not let you go," he began, panting for breath after his race, "without letting you know——"

"It is Tom," she cried out in wonder and delight; "or, am I mad or dreaming?"

"I really am not sure that I am awake myself," returned Tom Dwyer. "The thing was so sudden and

unexpected. But I at once remembered you, and thought I'd be able to overtake you before you had got across the river. So it is at Poul-na-copple the good-bye is to be said," he went on, with a sad smile. "Good-bye, Alice," he said, taking her hand. "I really feel hopeful and in high spirits at this moment. The boys are as full of courage and self-sacrifice; and so cool and obedient to orders, too. After what I have seen with my own eyes during the past few weeks, I'll never despair of Ireland. But let me tell you how it happens that I am here, though five minutes ago I thought I was on the high road to the gallows or the dungeon. Well, all I know is that when we came to the hollow under the grove, I saw the arms snatched, as if by magic, from the six policemen. Immediately some one said, 'This is not the right key.'

'Yes, it is,' somebody else answered; 'give it to me.' Then I found my hands free from the hand-cuffs, and someone said,—'Here is your revolver; come on to the grove with us. There is a large body of police coming round from the bridge.' But I saw I had plenty of time to tell you. They won't catch me again so easily. And it is most fortunate that it has been done without bloodshed. The police were completely stunned; and one of them in his terror muttered 'Carrickshock.' But Charlie Flynn is a splendid little fellow. Good-bye again, Alice. I never felt so proud and so happy. Whatever my lot may be I'll never forget this night, Alice, and how you have acted. And now, once more, good-bye, and God bless you—a thousand and a thousand times. Oh! my darling Alice," he broke out, carried away by his emotion, and pressing her hand against his heart, which throbbed wildly and loudly enough to be heard, "Oh, will the day ever come when I can——."

He stopped suddenly. There was a great splash in the water near them, followed by a violent shaking of the boughs overhanging the river. They listened for a moment; but soon all was silent as before.

"It was one of Mr. Armstrong's old enemies—the

otters," he said, laughing. "Farewell! And, oh, Alice," he continued, drawing a long breath, "won't you sometimes think of me? Don't quite forget me."

"I never have forgotten you. I never will forget you," she replied, looking into the sad, dark eyes.

"And, Tom, she added earnestly, "I shall hope that this is not a *last* farewell."

Alice mechanically crossed over the stream and found herself upon the opposite bank, her whole being thrilled with a new feeling, an ecstasy of happiness which she never knew before. As she was turning from the river with a vague fear that her absence might be noticed and cause uneasiness to her mother, the branches of the tree began to shake violently again.

"What is that?" Alice asked, checking the impulse to run as fast as her legs could carry her to the house.

"Curse it," a voice replied from the deepest part of the pool, "I can't raise myself out of the water upon this tree."

"Come across here," said Alice, "and get up on the bank."

"But I can't swim," was the reply.

"Well, catch hold of this, and I'll pull you over," said Alice, taking Mave Cooney's cloak from her shoulders, and flinging it towards the white face which was bobbing up and down in a way which at another time might have made her laugh, with the swaying of the branch to which he was clinging.

"Mind, now; don't let go," he cried with a gasp, as he let himself out upon the deep dark waters of Poul-na-copple.

"Never fear," returned Alice. "Come on. Now catch my hand. There you are safe."

"'Twas the devil tempted me to try to get across," muttered Mr. Robert O'Keeffe through his chattering teeth.

"It is a curious coincidence," returned Alice. "Tom Dwyer saved Margaret from drowning in that very place when she was a child."

"D——n Tom Dwyer," Mr. O'Keeffe answered, shivering as if had got the ague. "I'll get my death of cold. But look here," he added, turning angrily upon her, "if you ever make a jest of this, 'twill be the worse for you."

"Mr. O'Keeffe," Alice replied, drawing herself up with a look of contemptuous displeasure, "you need not threaten me. I care little for your threats."

"My dear Alice," returned her brother-in-law, changing his mood with a celerity quite surprising, "you mistake me altogether. You see I'm a little put out, and feel miserably cold and wet; and it is all on account of my anxiety about you."

"About me" said Alice, in surprise:

"Well, I must slip upstairs as quietly as I can," he replied hurriedly, shrinking from her glance, which he found had something unpleasantly scrutinising in it. "I'll explain what I mean some other time."

"Oh, Alice! what kept you out so long?" her mother asked a minute or two afterwards. "I think you have been out more than a quarter of an hour."

"Is that all?" Alice asked, in real surprise, "I thought it could not be less than midnight now."

"I believe I need ask you no questions, Miss," said Julia Flynn, fixing her violet eyes upon Alice's face.

"You need not, Julia," returned Alice. "I'll owe you a debt of gratitude as long as I live."

"As you said them words, Miss," Julia hastily interrupted, "I'll ask a favour that I had it in my mind to ask this long time."

"What is it?" returned Alice, looking earnestly at her.

"To be my bridesmaid, Miss," Julia answered, with a blush.

"Oh! with great pleasure," said Alice, brightening up. "Julia and I," she continued, turning to her mother, who looked sufficiently puzzled and surprised from one to the other of the two blushing girls—for both were now as red as roses—"Julia and I have played the part of heroines in quite a little romance

to-night. But you must not ask us about it for a while, as we are bound to secrecy."

"Oh! I'm sure I don't want to learn your secrets," Mrs. Cormack replied, fancying that it was all connected in some way with Con Cooney, whose procrastination in the matter of his marriage was beginning to be talked of as something unprecedented and quite opposed to the good example set by the hero of Con's own favourite song, who "First took a notion to marry" when "the moon was just seen in the west," and forthwith "rattled the pin" at his sweetheart's door, telling her that he had "courted a year," and thought that quite sufficient, and after just a little parley she accompanied him "over the mountain," and when "the morning star clearly was shining" the happy pair were "joined at the altar of Hymen." Con Cooney was wont to croon this song to the accompaniment of the cricket behind the pot-hangers, sometimes to the indignation of his mother, who began to see a way of getting Mave settled "without a fortune," and was accordingly impatient at the postponement of her son's marriage, which Con himself seemed to take easy enough.

Mrs. Cormack, then, not unnaturally concluded that the "romance" of which Alice had just spoken was in some way connected with Julia Flynn's marriage, and was content to wait patiently for the development of the plot.

"And who is to be 'best man,' Julia?" she asked with a quiet smile.

"Mr. Armstrong, ma'am," Julia replied. "Unless a friend of Con's comes home in time from America," she added, glancing at Alice.

"That reminds me of poor Tom Dwyer," returned Mrs. Cormack. "The police brought him to my mind at once. And it appears it was the old house they intended to search for arms. But why did Robert run out in such a hurry?" she added, going to the window. "And what can be delaying him?"

"He's upstairs," Alice replied.

"But, see, Julia! I think the police are in the old house now, for I see a light passing from window to window."

"Yes, Miss, I see," said Julia. "'Tis surprising how little people mind being knocked up by the police now. Even Mave Cooney wasn't much frightened last night. But this reminds me that I must hurry home, or she'll be thinking that someone has run off with me."

* * * * *

Two weeks after the search of Martin Dwyer's old house, two items of news appeared in all the papers, and were read aloud by Murty Magrath in Rody Flynn's workshop.

One was to the effect that Sub-Constable Sproule, of Shannaclough station, had been promoted to the rank of acting-constable. The other interesting item of news consisted simply of the name and address in full of Mr. Robert O'Keeffe, among half-a-dozen others, preceded by the phrase, "The following gentlemen have been appointed to the Commission of the Peace."

"So we'll have a Catholic magistrate on the bench," said the sheriff's officer. "And Joe Sproule is on the first rung of the ladder by which he is to mount to a gentleman's life. The breeze is not altogether a bad one that blows a peeler up a step and lands the parish priest's nephew on the bench of magistrates. But poor Sergeant Stiggins had a narrow escape, and was glad to get off with a reprimand for disobedience of orders. I think, too, we'll be apt to have Sub-Inspector O'Keeffe back again shortly. Local knowledge, as Sproule remarked, is very valuable sometimes."

But Murty Magrath was quite mistaken in thinking that the information which brought the police to Corriglea had come, directly or indirectly, through the parish priest, for Father Feehan will learn for the first time, through these pages, of Tom Dwyer's coming to Ireland to initiate an insurrection under his very nose.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

AMBROSE ARMSTRONG'S PLANS.

THE "suspicious strangers" had all disappeared, like the swallows (some thought to re-appear like the swallows), with the exception of a few—of whom, we are happy to say, Tom Dwyer was not one—who remained behind to hibernate in gloomy plans; and peace and quietness reigned from end to end of the parish of Shannaclough.

"I am very anxious to know who is to be our landlord," said Mrs. Cormack.

"So am I," replied her husband, who seemed to have regained some of his old energy, "I'm glad that fellow who wanted a residence was outbid, though he went very high."

"I declare," Alice remarked, "I am feeling quite nervous about it. I'm always thinking of poor little Nannie and Nellie, and their misery and anguish when they were going away. I feel something like it myself now."

Her father's face twitched, while her mother laid her work upon her knees, and looked wistfully through the window at the old ivy-covered farmhouse.

"Here is Mr. Armstrong," Alice continued. "Perhaps he can tell us something."

"We were just talking about the property," said Mrs. Cormack, when Mr. Armstrong had entered the room, having just left his fishing-rod and basket in the glass porch among the geraniums. "Who can it be for whom the purchase was made in trust?"

"Well," Mr. Armstrong replied, looking a little embarrassed, and even troubled, "there's no use in making a mystery of it. I am the purchaser."

All three rose from their chairs in sheer astonishment.

"And you are our landlord?" said Alice, her eyes sparkling with pleasure and wonder.

"Yes, Alice," he replied, but sadly; "I am your father's landlord, and Con Cooney's," he added, glancing up the mountain to the two fields that Julia Flynn compared to an open book laid upon the brown heather.

"Shake hands, old friend," said Ned Cormack. "The first rent I ever paid was to your father. He was a fair agent, and we were always good friends. And," added Ned Cormack, significantly, as after a little pause, "he approved of long leases."

"So do I," the old angler replied; "but the truth might as well be told first as last. You must give me up Martin Dwyer's farm."

"What!" Ned Cormack exclaimed, looking quite blank, "is it after all the money I lost by it?"

"You lost money in other ways," returned Mr. Armstrong, mildly.

"That's true," Ned Cormack replied, with a frown; "I don't know what came over me to be such a fool. Only for O'Keeffe I'd be a rich man to-day. But it is a fine thing," he added, with a spice of his old sarcasm, "to be the father-in-law of a J.P."

"You're a rich man still," said Mr. Armstrong; "and you won't be much less rich when you give up Corriglea; and I'll give you as long a lease as you wish of your own farm."

"Do you mean to work the farm yourself?" Ned Cormack asked.

"No," Ambrose Armstrong replied, in a louder and firmer voice than he had yet spoken in. "I mean to have our old schoolfellow, Martin Dwyer, home again in Corriglea."

"Edward," said Mrs. Cormack, laying her hand upon her husband's arm, "we have never been happy since

we got the place. I have often wished to see them back again; and how glad Mrs. Bernard will be."

"Do you think would Tom come home?" Ned Cormack asked.

"Yes, of course; I expect he will," said Mr. Armstrong.

"I always liked Tom Dwyer," Ned Cormack went on, as if he had not heard the reply to his question. "I was always lonesome after Tom Dwyer. I think," he added, "if I had him to talk to me and go about the farm I'd be less lonely than I am. I thought I'd never again care for anything; but I have to some extent shaken off that feeling. And—I'd certainly like to have Tom Dwyer for a neighbour again."

"I'm truly glad," said Mr. Armstrong, "that you are in that frame of mind. I was afraid that pressure should be put upon you."

"And would you eject me?" Ned Cormack asked, looking into the old angler's mild pale face.

"Certainly, yes," was the reply. "I could not do it for myself. I never could do anything for myself. But I'd have the sheriff upon you soon enough for the sake of the poor exiles far away."

"You are a good man," said Ned Cormack, with more softness in his look and tone than his wife had ever before observed. "You'd make all the world happy if you could."

How happy Alice looked. She'd like to fling her arms round her father's neck and kiss him. It was not because she saw a likelihood of Tom Dwyer's return. At the moment she scarcely thought of that at all. Her intense gladness arose from discovering that her father cared so much for Tom Dwyer.

And as for that dear, handsome old gentleman with the silvery hair, Alice positively believed that she'd rather marry him there and then than any other man living—except one.

"Well, I'm off to the river now," said the old angler. "I could not fish in peace and quietness till I had found out how we were likely to get on as landlord and tenant."

Lord! what a beautiful house this is—and how handsome the lawn looks. And such a nice view of Corringlea Bridge! And so near the river! For heaven's sake get your lease prepared as fast as ever you can. The temptation is too great for poor human nature to resist it."

There was great laughing at this sally, and the old gentleman hurried off to enjoy his favourite amusement in peace and quietness.

"He could do it," said Ned Cormack. "He could rob me if he wished. And I can't see how this Land Bill could save me, even if it becomes law."

* * * * *

Another peep into the little room in Brooklyn, N.Y. Martin Dwyer, looking as patient and careworn, and withal good humoured as ever, has laid the big key on the chimney-piece, and opened his newspaper for a quiet read in the rocking chair. Nannie and Nellie are wavering between a walk in the open air and the attraction of a story which Nellie's "pet Nun" had sent them, saying that she sent the well-thumbed copy from the convent library instead of the new one she had got specially for them, "because," the gentle Sister of Mercy wrote, "I thought you'd like a book that had been in almost every house within view of your old home, and has been read by every one of your old school companions."

While Nannie paused with her fingers between the leaves, and Nellie swung her hat backward and forward irresolutely, a loud cry, which, for the want of a better word, we must call a yell, was heard from the hall downstairs. To be sure, this was only Cauth Manogue's everyday way of giving vent to her feelings when anything out of the common happened. But this particular yell was unlike any other that Nannie and Nellie had ever heard on that side of the Atlantic, and had, in fact, the genuine Corringlea ring in it. Hence they both paused and listened, and even their father let his news-

paper drop upon his knees and looked round. There was a step upon the stairs. The door handle was turned. The door opened softly. All at once the hat and the book and the newspaper dropped upon the floor. The little girls sprang to their feet with a piercing scream. The next minute Martin Dwyer was walking round and round Ambrose Armstrong wanting to shake hands with him, but finding the ceremony impracticable, for Nannie and Nellie were on their knees, each having possession of one of Mr. Armstrong's white slender hands, kissing it wildly.

Mrs. Dwyer rushed in from the adjoining room, looking dreadfully frightened, and then astonished to bewilderment, and then beside herself with delight. And then terror took possession of Mrs. Dwyer again on remembering that she had a saucepan in each hand, and that her hands were very greasy, and that her cap was not quite suitable to receive visitors in. So Mrs. Dwyer retired precipitately, unhappily coming plump against her handmaiden, thereby calling forth another yell, and causing dire clatter and confusion among the cooking conveniences appertaining to the stove.

Nellie was the first to heed her father's remonstrances, and set Mr. Armstrong's hand free, to be grasped in the old farmer's honest palm.

"Well, Amby," said Martin Dwyer, with the simple surprise of a child, "who'd ever think of seeing you in America."

"Oh! Mr. Armstrong," Nellie exclaimed, "now that I have time to think, I hope you were not ejected; or what does it mean?"

"It means, my dear," he replied, "that I have come to bring you home to Corriglea. Yes, Martin," he went on, replying to the old farmer's incredulous smile, "it is really so. I have purchased that portion of the estate. I have the honour and glory of being a landed proprietor. You'll be my tenant, and I'll be your landlord. I have always read your letters to Alice, my dears," he went on, addressing the twins, who seemed unable to com-

prehend his words. "I had no necessity to inquire whether you all wished to be back in the old house at home. So I made up my mind to be the bearer of the glad news myself. The voyage has done me good. I'll just have time to have a look at this wonderful country while you get ready for a voyage to old Ireland. So, my little pets, I'll see you again in the old orchard. It is let to Terry Hanrahan this year as usual. And I promised Molly to have you home in time to be her bridesmaid; for you know from Alice that Molly is to be Mrs. Joe Cooney when the orchards are shaken. I think Mave Cooney will be wanting your services too. But Julia Flynn has Alice engaged. So the word is—*Home to Corriglea!*" exclaimed Amby Armstrong, with a flourish of his white hand.

"Oh, Nellie!"

"Oh, Nannie!"

The sisters were locked in each others arms.

Martin Dwyer, too, flourished his hand above his head, and then brought it down slowly but emphatically upon the table.

"I always said," he went on, "that I'd have a farm before I'd die; but as the Fenians were not able to do anything, I gave up all hope of Corriglea. Well," continued Martin Dwyer, after a pause, "you'll never turn me out for voting according to my conscience. But what does Ned Cormack say?"

"He is quite willing to give up the farm and they'll all be glad to have you back," Mr. Armstrong replied.

"I'm very glad to hear that," said Martin Dwyer. "We were always good friends. And I'll be able to pay him back that £100."

And in his simple, truthful way, Martin Dwyer congratulated himself upon the fortunate circumstance that he'd be home in time for the seed-sowing. And he'd try the "beardy wheat" this year in the "hill field," as the several other kinds which he had sown in that particular field, though looking very promising when ready for the reaping-hook, and even "going into

the barn," still were found afterwards "not to have the produce." During the evening he favoured his landlord with his plans for the future—what he would commence to do at once, and the wonderful things he would do "hereafter." And while Ambrose Armstrong listened, looking alternately from Nannie's beaming blue to Nellie's sparkling black eyes, he thought himself the happiest landlord proprietor on the face of the earth.

"There's only one thing troubling me," said Mr. Armstrong. "I'm not sure yet whether Tom will be with us."

"I'm afraid," Martin Dwyer replied, "he wouldn't be satisfied to live in Corrignlea now."

"I think he's more anxious to go home than any of us," said Nannie, "though he never talks about it. But I'd know by his face whenever we have a letter from Alice."

"To be sure he'll come home," put in her mother. "Is it to let *me* into a ship to cross the wide ocean he would? And who would *I* have to do anything for me, if Tom didn't come home?"

Mrs. Dwyer withdrew to the adjoining room feeling that she had been ill-treated, but resolved to bear her wrongs with dignity, and commenced to remonstrate with Cauth for having everything just what it ought not to be, in tones of such subdued and persuasive gentleness, that the fat handmaiden at first fairly blubbered, and immediately after burst into beaming gladness and requested her mistress to wait till they'd be at home and she'd see "how good she'd be." And then mistress and maid looked into each others eyes, and, in spirit, were standing one on either side of the big pig-trough in the old farm-yard at Corrignlea.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

MARTIN DWYER BEATS THE QUEEN'S COUNTY—A QUADRILATERAL CEREMONY.

"THIS lad o' mine is in a bad way," Davy Lacy muttered to himself as he untied his leather apron, keeping his eyes fixed upon his son, who had just given the finishing touch to a neat little pair of boots.

Young Davy gazed ruefully at the boots for a full minute, and then let his forehead drop down upon the blackened and wax-stiffened apron that covered his knees.

"He's really a serious case," thought his father, hanging his own apron on the back of a chair, and glancing at his blue bodycoat which hung on a peg opposite. "I'll try and hunt him to the nine holes before I go down to Rody's," he went on, "for if I don't, there he'll stay till he's called to his supper. Dick!" the melancholy shoemaker called out, reaching his hand for a cold boiled potato, which he seemed to have hidden among his lasts.

The one-eyed cock was immediately upon the floor before him, looking every way at once with his single optic. What the original colour of his plumage might have been would be now a difficult point to determine, for a very begrimed and battered fowl was the one-eyed cock. Nine different times had that cock been brought home for dead—on the last occasion it was positively averred by Jacky the Cobbler, having been actually swallowed, all but his legs, by Tim Rourke's old sow. So that it was popularly believed that nature had been

more liberal to Davy Lacy's cock in the matter of lives than to a cat. This remarkable bird, having alighted upon the floor, and looked every way at once for some seconds, the red appendages to his head and throat trembling the while like the loose petals of a poppy fluttering in the wind, suddenly allowed his head to remain at right angles to his neck, and fixed the eye upon his master, who went on deliberately breaking the cold-boiled potato into small pieces upon that portion of the "seat" which is never sat upon, except inadvertently, the incautious person usually discovering his mistake very quickly, and occasionally reminded of it at some future time, when, to his great astonishment, he finds considerable difficulty in detaching himself from the next chair or bench upon which he has remained sitting for any considerable length of time.

We once knew an amiable and affectionate family to suffer much distress of mind on account of an accident of the kind referred to happening to one of its members. He was an only son—a very good young man. A young lady, who was not only an only daughter, but the only child of the wealthiest man in the place, was spending the evening with them. He was a silent young man, and given to smiling. They had drawn their chairs round the hearth, and the time was passing pleasantly, when the mother noticed a very strange expression in her boy's face. She had just telegraphed to him to offer one of the two hand-screens on the chimney piece—the one with the forget-me-nots round the border—to the heiress who was holding her open hands between her face and the fire, which for some ten minutes before had been all one blaze from top to bottom. The young man's eyes seemed ready to start out of his head the moment after he had caught the signal to present the hand-screen to the young lady. His mother, under the impression that it was apoplexy, bounded across the hearth and commenced slapping him violently upon both cheeks. The father shouted to him to "stand up," at which the young man opened his mouth as well as his

eyes, but no sound issued therefrom. The eldest girl—the forget-me-nots on the hand-screen were done by her in Berlin wool—was on the brink of hysterics. And the heiress showed symptoms of running away home without her bonnet. The old gentleman seized the youth with both hands by the collar of his coat and pulled him upon his feet. His legs straightened, but his back remained at a right angle to them. The chair was the cause of this. The old gentleman went round, and, seizing the chair by the two hind legs, gave it a pull; but he soon found he was pulling his son backwards about the room. The eldest girl came to the rescue, and, clutching her brother by the hair of the head, held him fast. There was a sound like that produced by the drawing of a cork; and the young man was able to stand upright as soon as his sister let go his head. The old gentleman, holding the bottom of the chair, close to the candle, examined it carefully; and then, holding it to his nose, uttered the monosyllable “Wax!” Then the young man remarked that when trying on his new boots at the bootmaker’s that afternoon he inadvertently sat upon that portion of the “seat” not intended for that purpose. He was instantaneously reminded of his mistake by the consciousness of half-a-dozen awls of different sizes, and a little heap of window glass broken into very small pieces, and—more particularly—by a handful of tacks, the majority of which were standing upon their heads—and, quick as the rebound of an India-rubber ball, he was off that wrong side of the “seat.” But the mischief was done without his knowing it. His mother was thankful that it was not apoplexy. But she always attributed her son’s ill-success with the heiress—who married a man old enough to be her father the month following—to that ball of shoemaker’s wax.

Davy Lacy, having cleared a corner of the “seat” for the purpose, broke the boiled potato into fragments, and commenced throwing them, one by one, to the one-eyed cock, who caught them in the air before they could

touch the ground, and swallowed them—judging from the violent agitation of his head and its adornments, at the imminent risk of choking himself.

But young Davy, who usually looked on with interest while the cock partook of his evening meal, never raised his head.

“Finish them boots,” said his father, “an’ don’t be makin’ a fool o’ yourself.”

Young Davy raised his head, and looked bewildered into his father’s face.

“I’m tellin’ you,” the father repeated, “not to be makin’ a fool o’ yourself.”

“After teaching her fifteen tunes on the concertina,” young Davy gasped, still looking piteously into his parent’s face.

“Finish the boots, an’ go down an’ have a game of nine-holes,” said the shoemaker, throwing his bodycoat upon his shoulders. This is the busiest week we have had except in Shrove.”

“An’ her foot a size smaller than Miss Cormack’s,” young Davy added, with a sigh, as he took one of the boots in his hand and contemplated its proportions—the smallness of the foot for which it was intended seeming to be, to young Davy Lacy’s mind, a very aggravating addition to the fifteen tunes on the concertina.

“Is it possible,” his father asked, “that you war thinkin’ of marryin’ her?”

“No, I wasn’t,” young Davy answered, emphatically; “but what good will she be for me up there, half way to the top of the mountain? And Mave hasn’t a note in her,” he added, dejectedly.

“Speak o’ the divil an’ he’ll appear,” said Davy, senior. “Here’s the ‘Unfortunate Rake’ approaching the minute you spoke of notes; an’ I know ’tis for the boots he’s comin’; but people must have patience.”

“‘Arise, bonnie lassie,’ an’ bundle an’ go,” sang Joe Cooney as he entered the door—the transition from whistling to singing commencing just as he put his foot over the threshold.

"Joe," said Davy Lacy, senior, eyeing his visitor as if he regarded Joe Cooney as anything but a reputable member of society, "Joe, I congratulate you, that there's to be neither bundlin' nor goin', on the part of the bonnie lassie. But you're goin' to bundle an' go into the snuggest house in this street, at any rate. But on'y think of this lad o' mine breakin' his heart frettin' afther Julia."

"We'll get over that soon enough," returned Joe Cooney. "We wor all a little that way about Julia."

"An' he thinks it unfortunate," said the melancholy shoemaker, "that Mave hasn't a note in her."

"Oh, the divil a note," returned Joe, with ready and hearty assent.

"But if you want notes, Davy," he added, turning to the young man, "where can you find such notes as Molly Hanrahan's? An' if you take a walk into us of an evenin', Davy, you'll be heartily welcome. An' if Molly don't put Julia out of your head in less than no time, my name's not Joe Cooney. I had a thrial uv id myself. So," he added, addressing himself to the young man's father, "you may make your mind aisy about him: I'll engage to have him all right in less than no time. But have you the boots made? My mother is waitin' for 'em at Rody Flynn's."

"They'll be in time," returned Davy Lacy. "I'll take a walk down an' explain the delay to herself."

Old Mrs. Cooney drove out of the cooper's yard in the jennet's cart, looking a little offended with Davy Lacy, but too happy to be entirely out of humour with anybody.

"She's a lucky woman," said the shoemaker, as he took possession of the half-door, and cast a scrutinising eye upon the poplar tree. "Two daughters-in-law, an' wan son-in-law, the wan day, is a remarkable thing in the life of a widow."

"I remember a weddin'," returned Rody Flynn, "when the three brothers were married to the three sisters the wan day—in the Queen's County."

"An' then we are to have another marriage besides

in the chapel that day," said Davy Lacy, "which makes it more remarkable."

"There was two other couple married in the same chapel the same day as the three brothers an' the three sisters in the Queen's County," rejoined Rody Flynn, his round black eyes sparkling, and his chubby face beaming all over at the delightful reminiscence or whatever it was.

The shoemaker turned round and fixed his lack-lustre eyes upon the sparkling ones that absolutely seemed dancing under the raised brows; but before he had time to give utterance to his feelings, Julia hurried out into the workshop, with a red cloak and some other things upon her arm, and, rather unceremoniously pulling the half-door open, forced the shoemaker to stand with his heels and his poll against the partition, the bolt of the door pressing uncomfortably upon his stomach.

"Ah, miss," said Julia Flynn, as she placed the red cloak on the "conversation cushion" of the side-car, which had stopped opposite the workshop door, "you can't keep your promise to me after all."

"Oh! yes, I can, Julia," was the reply, through the folds of a thick veil that quite concealed the wearer's face.

"How, miss?" Julia asked in surprise.

The question seemed embarrassing. The hidden face looked all round; but just as the reply to Julia's question seemed about to issue from behind the thick veil, Jacky the Cobbler was seen approaching, and besides Davy Lacy had resumed his place, leaning over the half-door, and might be listening.

"What does she mean, ma'am?" Julia asked, looking frightened and addressing the lady on the other side of the car.

"Oh! let herself explain," laughingly replied that lady, who, as she wore no thick veil over her face, we may tell you was Mrs. Cormack, of Rockview, looking as young and as winning and as happy as the first day you saw her—her husband would say, as the first day *he* saw her.

"Because," said the voice from behind the thick veil, the wearer bending down so as to be heard in a whisper, "because you are to be the first."

"I never thought of that," exclaimed Julia in high glee. "You'll be my bridesmaid first, and then you'll be married yourself."

"Oh, Julia, speak low. That's the way. Nannie and Nellie will be my bridesmaids. And then—in defiance of the proverb—Nannie will be Mave Cooney's bridesmaid, and Nellie will be Molly Hanrahan's."

"I can't tell you how glad I am," returned Julia, with sparkling eyes. "But if you were as used to be going to be married as I am, miss, you wouldn't be half as shy as you are. Mave is the same way," continued Julia, laughing. "She went to Mass last Sunday to Ballinsoggarth because she thought everybody would be looking at her if she came to Shannaclough. Do you know what I think, miss," she added, suddenly changing her manner. "We all have reason to be thankful to the Fenians."

"How do you make that out, Julia?" Mrs. Cormack asked in some curiosity.

"Because, ma'am, 'twas that that brought Charlie home. And if Charlie didn't come home he and Mave would never be married. And only for they getting married, the Lord knows when Con would say the words. And I'm thinking, too," Julia added, with an arch glance at the thick veil, "that only for the same reason somebody else might never know how fond somebody was of her."

"Yes," returned Mrs. Cormack, who seemed to enjoy the suggestion—we can't tell what was going on behind that provoking veil—" 'twas some friendly fairy from the halls under the mountain that prompted you to come in to us that night you were the bearer of the despatch. Good evening, Julia."

"That's another happy woman," Davy Lacy remarked, as the car drove on.

"There's no wan so happy as Martin Dwyer,"

returned Rody Flynn. "Ned Cormack, too, is a new man. He takes wonderfully to young Tom. If he was his own son he could not think more of him. He couldn't live without him now for wan month. But Martin Dwyer is the happiest man on—the face of the—habitable globe this minute," added Rody Flynn, running "habitable globe" into its place after an unusually long wait. "There *never* was a happier man than Martin Dwyer," he went on. "I'm better pleased of that walk I had yesterday over his farm with him than if I was made a present of a fifty pound note. I never met so happy a man as Martin Dwyer since he came home to Corriglea."

"Not in the Queen's County?" the shoemaker asked.

"N-o-o," Rody Flynn replied, after some wavering. "I never did meet so happy a man as Martin Dwyer in the Queen's County."

"Well," returned Davy Lacy, "all I can say is that Martin Dwyer, of Corriglea, must be a miracle when the Queen's County couldn't beat him. But, Julia," he called out, "here's this lad of mine bringing your boots home. An' for God-Almighty sake, hunt him to the nine-holes, an' don't let that musical bellows into his hands. It has all the good sucked out of the boy's body. There's not a stir in him, except in his fingers."

"Wait till you see him dancing with me at my wedding," returned Julia. "And 'tis many's the tune we'll have together upon the mountain."

* * * * *

"It must be universally admitted, *nemine contradicente*," said Acting-Constable Sproule, who stood in a corner of the chapel yard on the day of the weddings, "that Mave Cooney is the most beautiful of the brides."

"She takes the sway," replied a voice at his elbow, which sent a shiver through the acting-constable's frame, as it always did when heard unexpectedly and close to him. "Yes," added Nell the Cobbler, "Charlie

Flynn has the pick of the sieve. But did you ever see any wan so like a lady as Molly Hanrahan?"

"You're decidedly in the right, ma'am," returned Joe Sproule, respectfully. "She has a Spanish aspect. That's observable to the most casual spectator."

"'Twas the nuns that dressed her up that way, and put that long white veil on her," put in Mrs. Laurence Foley. "An' a quare thing a veil is widout a bonnet," Mrs. Foley added, contemptuously.

"Dressin' up would never have the desired effect, Mrs. Foley," said Joe Sproule. "Training is an essential preliminary in such cases; and certainly whether by the force of precept or example, the religious communities are singularly successful in importin' graces of carriage, manners, and behaviour to the feminine section of the youth of the present day. We know too many of their prototypes of an earlier generation," added Acting-Constable Sproule, with a peculiar glance from the corner of his eye at the cobbler's wife, accompanied by an automatic movement of his left hand to his mouth.

"And, Joe," said his wife, enchanted with his eloquence, "doesn't Mr. Armstrong look lovely with the white waistcoat?"

"Where could you see so handsome a gentleman as my master?" Ponsonby asked, "or so gentle a pony as Jessie? And who is Rover going to all the weddings with? Mr. M'Auley says I want to beat Sir Boyle Roche's bird, and be in four places at once. But as I'm to have the pony, I'll manage it. First up the mountain with Mave; then down to Rockview in time to have a fling of an old shoe at the carriage when they are starting for Killarney; then back to Julia Flynn and Molly Hanrahan."

"You'll have a great day's fun," said Murty Magrath, lightly passing his fingers over the edge of his high cravat, which his son-in-law remarked was "unprecedentedly free from wrinkles and irregularities."

"I'm certainly rather excited," returned Ponsonby,

"and at a loss whether I ought to put on these white gloves at once. You see, I'll ride the yellow pony everywhere. No occasion to put her in a stable. She'll stand at the doors as quiet as a lamb. The distance between Rody's and Larry Hanrahan's is only fifty-five yards. But I'll ride up and down every time I feel a fancy to go from one wedding to the other."

"'Tis to be all 'up an' down Dick Tobin's lane' with the two parties," said the sheriff's officer, quoting the first line of a local ditty.

"The yellow pony an' the white greyhound will impart picturesqueness to the proceedings," Joe Sproule remarked. "Certainly," he went on, having no suspicion that the bridegroom was the "suspicious stranger," "Mr. Dwyer is a fine looking fellow, and his wife is most lovely and fascinatin'. Now that she is smilin' at Mr. Armstrong, I can see that the attractions of her face decidedly predominate over the more correct outlines of her sister's beauty, which at the present moment seems to be overshadowed by a cloud of fretfulness," Joe Sproule added, looking at Mrs. Robert O'Keeffe, who had no one to hand her into her carriage, everybody, including the J.P. himself, being taken up with the bride.

"I think I had best mount," said Ponsonby. "They'll be off immediately, and I'm not going to be left behind. Oh! I must blow my whistle," he added. "There's Rover off to the bridesmaids."

Nannie and Nellie, dressed all in white, stooped down to pat and caress the white greyhound, though Mr. Armstrong's gloved hand was extended to hand them into the carriage. Alice, whose bashfulness appeared to have vanished at the touch of the wedding ring, looked round and seemed to enjoy the scene. But the moment the whistle was blown the white greyhound escaped with a bound from the little bridesmaids' blandishments, and was in a second looking wistfully up into his master's wandering, brown eyes, as, mounted upon the yellow pony, his flowing black beard

blown about by the winds, he drew on the white gloves, eager to take his place and keep it in the procession—the like of which, it may be added, was never before or since seen leaving the chapel of Shannaclough, and, in all human probability, never will be unless a second miracle should be witnessed in the parish (Martin Dwyer being the first) and the Queen's County be beaten again.

"Ye may talk of beauty," said Davy Lacy, who, with a headstone as a substitute for Rody Flynn's half-door, had been a silent listener to the foregoing random interchange of thought, "but when, besides in a copper-plate, did ye ever see anything like the two little girls? I shut my eyes three different times to try could I make up my mind which is the black-haired wan or the fair-haired wan the handsomest. But I'm as far from bein' able to decide now as ever I was."

"Here's Con an' Julia," said Mrs. Larry Foley.

"An' here's Joe an' Molly," cried Cauth Manogue, who, wonderful to relate, had not perpetrated a single yell during the whole morning.

"An' here's Charlie an' Mave," shouted Nell the Cobbler. "An' Jim," she added, turning to Jim Foley, who was cautiously creeping into a beard, as "law and order" resumed their sway. "Ah, Jim, all the purty girls are goin' from you."

"Please don't address yourself to me," returned Jim Foley, who stood at a little distance, with arms folded, and seemed barely to tolerate the day's proceedings.

"Indeed, my good woman," indignantly remonstrated Mrs. Foley, as she hastily tied the string of her bonnet under her chin—the disturbing thought having at the moment effected a lodgment in her brain that "Laurence Foley, Licensed to Sell," had turned the cock of the whiskey keg for his own special behoof more frequently than was desirable during her absence. "Indeed, my good woman, whenever you take the liberty of spakin' to my son, Mr. James Foley, you ought at laste to have the good manners to 'sir' him, ma'am."

"Evil communications corrupt good manners,"

muttered Acting-Constable Sproule, under his breath. "Good manners would be a *lusus naturæ* in the first and second cousin of an itinerant tinsmith who rejoices in the *nom-de-guerre* of the 'double-breasted.' Please, ladies," he said aloud, having observed an ominous blaze in Nell the Cobbler's eyes, "don't mar the harmony of this memorable day's proceedings by any incidental discrepancies that might possibly lead to regrettable consequences. The quadrilateral ceremony which has just been celebrated in your parish place of worship will, I have no doubt, go down to posterity embalmed in the recollections of all who have witnessed it. So, pray, let no wordy contentions, or collisions of a more violent character, disturb the equilibrium of the general mind. In the whole course of my experience an event never came within the scope of my observation which diffused so unanimous a sensation of gratification among a community as the combination of happy coincidences which has just been enacted before us. Not only have the principal performers acquitted themselves well, but the minor and supernumerary parts have been filled in a way that must have given general satisfaction."

That jennet trotted as if she had been rehearsing for months. And the yellow pony's canter round the corner left nothing to be desired. The whole drama went off in a manner creditable to all concerned, and must have left the most censorious critic at a loss to point out a solitary flaw or hitch in the day's proceedings. The acting-constable's criticism was almost literally correct: Even Mrs. Dwyer returned from Rockview House, grumbling at having nothing to grumble at. In that wretched state of mind she felt that she could not close an eye if she went to bed. But just as she had decided on spending the night on the low stool by the kitchen fire, some kindly fairy from the halls under the mountain took compassion upon her, and whispered into her ear that "Father Feehan was 'great' with the Cormacks again." And Mrs. Dwyer

forthwith started up from the low stool with her grievance, and, going to bed, slept soundly upon it till clear daylight in the morning, when she was startled from her slumber by a yell from Cauth.

"What is it?" Mrs. Dwyer asked, thrusting her nightcap out of the window.

"Oh! nothin', ma'am," returned Cauth, who was balancing herself with some difficulty on the edge of the big pig-trough, with a view to be enabled to see over the whitethorn "ditch" of the long meadow, which had grown so long that Martin Dwyer intended to "bend" it early in spring. "Nothin', ma'am," returned Cauth, looking up at the nightcap; "only Charlie Flynn bringing Mave Cooney home, an' Con Cooney bringin' Julia Flynn home. An' they just got on the top uv the bridge, an' Julia lept out uv the car an' ran to kiss Mave, an' thin lept up agin 'dout the car stoppin' at all. I thought every bone in her body was broke. An' Ponsonby is flying along on the yellow pony. An' there's Bob Dee sittin' on the battlements smokin' away for the bare life," added Cauth. "The captain gave him a whole pound uv that flat tobaccy; an' Bob bought six new pipes an' three boxes uv matches last night, an' said he'd never stop till the sun 'ud rise."

The six new pipes and three boxes of matches however, were presented by Ponsonby to Bob Dee as a reward for his services in watching Jacky the Cobbler, who had been smitten with an uncontrollable passion for exhibiting his ankles, with his toes thrust into the stirrup-leathers of Mr. Armstrong's saddle, while Ponsonby mingled with the guests at Rody Flynn's and Terry Hanrahan's, at each of whose doors he mounted and dismounted thirteen different times in the course of the day. For this last-mentioned fact we have Davy Lacy's word, who was scrupulously accurate in the matter of statistics. And it is worth while recording that the idea that long wattles should be supplied to the police as a substitute for the clumsy and ungraceful weapon called "stirabout sticks" in

Shannaclough and its neighbourhood was first suggested to Acting-Constable Sproule on this occasion when he saw how effectually and easily—"a minimum of bodily exertion," was the acting-constable's expression—Bob Dee, without being obliged even to take his shoulder from the doorpost, managed to keep the chap with the ankles from the yellow pony.

When discussing this question of the wattle afterwards with his father-in-law, the further improvement of a crook at the end was broached, which, Joe Sproule was of opinion, "would certainly facilitate the incarceration of pigs, and might occasionally be found available in the case of an absconding biped of the street-arab species." So that if our guardians of the peace should at some future day be seen moving among us in the guise of gentle shepherds, let not any ambitious inspector or deputy-inspector general lay the flattering unction to his soul that *his* name will go down to posterity as the author of the Arcadian reform. The "gentleman's life" may never be yours, Joe Sproule. You may be left, as you say yourself, to "waste your sweetness on the desert air" in a remote village. But, if we can help it, not a leaf of the laurels which are justly yours, and yours only, shall be snatched from your brow. And glad we were, the last time we beheld you, standing with folded arms upon the bridge, gazing contemplatively upon that swinging sign, which to a meaner mind, under similar circumstances, would be an object of abhorrence, for it vividly recalled that "most eventful day of your life" when you first visited Shannaclough—but you were above cherishing resentment against "man or quadruped"—to quote your own reading of Larry Foley's swinging-sign. You cherish resentment! When the sheriff's officer, with a villainous wink of his left eye, beckoned you to follow him up Croobeen-lane and pointed to an object hanging outside the door of Jack Cassidy, the pork butcher, how did you comport yourself on that trying occasion? You recognised him at a glance, Joe Sproule, scalded and scraped, and

stiff and stark as he was, you knew it was the black pig from Glenmoynan. His liver dangled from the door-post. His very heart—called a “fol-de-rol” in that lane—was impaled upon a rusty crook above your head. The “chap with the ankles” stood near inflating his bladder by means of a broken pipe-stem. Did you exult? Did you by word, or look, or gesture triumph over your fallen foe? No, Joe Sproule; to your eternal honour be it recorded, you did nothing of the sort. You gazed for a moment in deep thought. You rebuked, with a look the unseemly levity in the sheriff’s officer’s left eye; and waving your hand and raising your eyes to the blue heaven above you, with true greatness of soul, and in a spirit of sublime charity, you repeated in solemn accents the words, “De mortuis nil nisi bonum,” and retraced your steps down Croobeen-lane, with compressed lips and eyes bent upon the unpaved and unmacadamised footway. Glad we were, we were about to say, the last time we saw Joe Sproule standing with folded arms upon the bridge of Shannaclough, to observe upon one of those folded arms *three* V’s of burnished gold, and to hear Mrs. Laurence Foley address him as “Sergeant,” to which Mrs. Foley added the endearing expression “alanna,” as she enquired in accents of persuasive tenderness whether he could not say “something” for her son, James Foley, that might prevent the fine from being so unconscionably heavy as it was “the last time.” To which the Sergeant replied in a loftily melancholy manner, “I anticipate not, Mrs. Foley, as he’s a habitual.” That was the last sight we got of Joe Sproule. And when next we see him we sincerely trust he will have attained the same rank as his mother’s first cousin who inflamed his youthful imagination with visions of a gentleman’s life.

CHAPTER XXXV

PONSONBY AND THE YELLOW PONY CREATE A
SENSATION—OFF TO KILLARNEY.

"I NEVER thought," said Davy Lacy, looking into Rody Flynn's sparkling eyes with a heart-broken, but resigned expression of countenance, "I never thought that lad o' mine had such spunk in him."

"He's the best dancer of the lot," returned Rody Flynn. "Con has the name of bein' a fine dancer; but, so far as I can judge, young Davy is takin' the shine out of him at that hop-jig at any rate. I never seen purtier steps, except with wan young fellow I knew in the Queen's County."

"Yes," said Ponsonby; "that's the best foot I saw yet. 'Tis all sets they have down at Terry Hanrahan's." Ponsonby had just dismounted at Rody Flynn's door for the fifth time after his fifty yards ride from Terry Hanrahan's corner, leaving Bob Dee to keep Jacky the Cobbler at wattle's length from the yellow pony. "But I must admit," he added, looking ruefully at his white gloves, which were showing decided symptoms of wear and tear, "I must admit that the mountain fellows are fine dancers. And the girls up there have great action. I was near being late at Rockview or account of 'em."

"How was that?" Rody Flynn asked.

"You see," returned Ponsonby, "'tis up on the tip-top of the mountain they have to dance—boys and girls, and old and young, and all. Nothing else would do Charlie but the tip-top of the mountain. He was always

a little cracked about mountains and old castles. If Mave was a lowlander I don't think he'd ever think of her. Women and sheep are quite different in that respect. But certainly," Ponsonby added, addressing space, "she looked beautiful sitting on that big rock. Yes, even more beautiful than Miss Alice in the carriage. 'Twas looking at her and the action of the mountain girls that made me let the time slip. But the pony is worth her weight in gold, and, heaven be praised, I saved my distance," Ponsonby added, fervently.

In fact, the yellow pony and her wild-looking rider created a sensation among the wedding guests at Rock-view House. Most of them were out upon the lawn to see the happy pair set off for Killarney. Alice, Nellie and Nannie and everybody said, looked even more lovely in the dark travelling-dress than in her bridal robes. She looked calm and happy; and as for the bridegroom—at least, so thought his brother-in-law, the J.P.—his coolness was quite exasperating. He did not look in the least elated by his good fortune, and never seemed to think of that handsome house and lawn, or of the broad acres, with their flocks and herds. The gay groups on the lawn and among the flower-beds outside the glass porch, however, were in a merrier mood; and Mr. Armstrong had some idea of slipping over the rustic gate on the other side of the road to have a peep at the picture through the middle arch of Corriglea Bridge. As this thought crossed his mind, he turned his eyes towards the bridge, and to his astonishment saw Alice running down to the river bank. Old Martin Dwyer was standing alone in the shade of the hazels, enjoying the scene before him, but seeming to regard all these young and happy and rich and stylish people as quite a different order of mortals from himself. The coachman had gathered up the reins and waved his whip softly in the air, the horses champed the bits and tossed their heads impatiently, the bride and bridegroom had taken their places in the carriage, when, before the steps could be turned up, to the amazement

of everybody, the bride, who looked so calm and queenly a moment before, sprang to the ground, and gliding swiftly across the smooth-shorn lawn, down to the hazels, kissed old Martin Dwyer upon both cheeks; and the wedding guests suddenly remembered that the white-haired farmer with the worn, pale face, was her husband's father. Alice returned more leisurely to the carriage, and had just taken her place beside her pledged and bearded spouse—whose eyes at the moment had a depth of absorbing love in them that almost suggested pain—when the clank of the hoofs was borne distinctly upon the breeze, and all eyes were turned towards the mountain.

"Heavens!" exclaimed Mr. Armstrong; "does he want to kill my pony and break his own neck?"

Down the rocky mountain boreen came the yellow pony at break-neck speed indeed, the wild-looking rider waving his arm above his head.

"They're safe!" said Mr. Armstrong, drawing a long breath, and pressing his hand to his forehead, as the reckless horseman drew rein on reaching the level road that skirted the mountain.

But an exclamation from Nannie and Nellie caused him to look up again, when, to his renewed astonishment he beheld Ponsonby carried over the fence of the long meadow in capital style by the yellow pony. There was a general laugh as the long legged rider raised himself in the stirrup, jockey-fashion, and put the pony to the top of her speed across the meadow, as if he were determined to beat the white greyhound by a neck before reaching Poul-na-Copple. The coachman added his guffaw to the chorus of laughter as he cracked his whip and gave the reins to his horses. But the horses shook their heads, and seemed not to have quite made up their minds whether they ought to move on or stand still. The good-humoured driver thought it prudent to allow them a minute for reflection, at the expiration of which he checked the reins with an encouraging "Gee-up." There was a moment's insipient backing and

prancing; the traces tightened, the wheels grated upon the ground, and as the carriage whirled away, Ponsonby, now on foot, was seen bounding through the laughing crowd that gazed after it, swinging his arm above his head, his large brown eyes flashing with intense eagerness. By an almost superhuman effort his long legs brought him within a score yards of the rapidly moving carriage; when, with all his might, he sent a missile flying through the air—and there was a great cheer and a clapping of hands as the carriage was struck with a loud bang by one of Con Cooney's old brogues, with which Ponsonby had provided himself when leaving the little farmhouse upon the mountain, on discovering that he had lost so much time admiring the "action" of the mountain girls, that he should be too late if he waited to search for an old shoe either at Corringlea or Rockview, as he had at first intended.

"Oh!" Alice exclaimed, recovering from the shock of the tremendous bang so close to her ear, "'tis the old shoe. I really believe *it will* be for 'good luck.' How delighted they all are. Look at your father, Tom, and poor Mr. Armstrong. I'm sure it was he planned it all."

"He's a wonderful man," returned Tom Dwyer, fixing his eyes upon the old ivied house. "We owe all to him. How little I hoped when I looked up at the old house after bidding you good-bye at Poul-na-Copple that night, Alice, that my poor father and my little sisters would ever see it again. It must be the study of our lives. Alice, to do everything we can to show our gratitude."

"I often thought of that. I often said the very same words to myself," she replied. "He has made us all happy. I never saw mamma so happy."

"And your father, too," Tom interrupted, "seems very well satisfied. I never thought," he added, with a laughing shake of the head, "that Ned Cormack would give his daughter to a poor man."

"Oh! Tom," returned Alice, seriously, "if you saw him after poor little Eddy's death. His heart was really

broken. I thought he'd never again feel the least interest in anything in this world. But, thank God," she added fervently, "he's now almost as happy as any of us."

"I'm not sure that I'm awake," said Tom Dwyer, as the carriage passed near Corringlea bridge. "It seems as if it was only yesterday I was standing with Mr. Armstrong at that old gate, reading 'She's coming, she's coming,' And what a spoony I was, too. I hadn't the courage to welcome you home that evening, nor the courage to bid you good-bye when I was going away afterwards. I suppose I'm an exception to the rule, 'Faint heart never won fair lady' Had you any notion at all that I was so gone about you?"

"Not the least," returned Alice, laughing; "and I never felt anything like sure that you thought about me at all, until that night I had the honour of being the bearer of the despatch from the head centre."

"And if Ponsonby had not sold the pass on us," said Tom, "you could not have delivered the despatch."

"And there he is with the yellow pony's bridle on his arm, walking leisurely through the meadow to the gate. He's waving his hat to us. Put out your hand and wave your handkerchief in return."

"The white greyhound sees you," he added, as Rover pricked up his ears when the handkerchief floated from the carriage window.

"He was not an 'unlucky white greyhound' after all," said Alice, giving another wave to the gossamer handkerchief. "You know only for him I'd probably never have known how to cross over Poul-na-Copple. But they are all waving handkerchiefs," she added, "Nannie and Nellie, and mamma, and Mr. Armstrong—and everybody."

"And the waving is not all on that side," returned Tom, who had just looked up at his father's old house with a feeling of something like regret that it was no longer to be his home.

Alice turned her eyes to the other side of the road, and there was Mrs. Dwyer, who had hurried home

immediately after the breakfast, as of course she could not afford to be idle like other people, standing at the dairy door flourishing a "strainer" above her head; and Cauth Manogue, who had jumped into the donkey-cart in the middle of the yard, unfurling her check apron to the breeze with a yell that sent all the crows in the elm trees in terror and confusion as high up in the air as their wings could carry them.

In front of every humble home they passed for miles stood little groups of glad faces, in every one of which "I wish you joy" was plainly written. For Tom Dwyer's marriage was popularly declared to be "the best thing that ever happened"—a phrase, however, which was used with almost equal gusto in connection with the tragical fate of Mr. Percy Perrington a few years before.

"Oh, Tom, why do you look so sad?" Alice asked. There is no use in telling me that you are not. I have watched you for the last ten minutes, and it is more and more gloomy you are becoming."

"I am blessed beyond my wildest dreams, Alice," he replied. "But still you are right, there is a great sorrow at my heart."

The colour faded from her cheeks as she looked inquiringly into his dark eyes.

"Do you not know what my hopes have been?" he asked. "And do you not know how they have ended?"

"Would it not," she replied in a low, earnest tone, "would it not be worse if you never tried at all?" I think it is like—

"Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all."

"That's true," returned Tom Dwyer, with a glad and grateful look; "and, thank heaven, 'lost' does not, and never did, apply to the good old cause of the poor old country."

"I suppose," said Alice, with a suspicion of indignation in her tone, "I suppose you thought yourself a deserter for getting married. If I were your wife at

that time, do you imagine I would try to hold you back ? On the contrary, I'd have made you a better soldier and patriot than ever you were."

Alice said this with a little forced frown of mock displeasure, which mightily amused her lord. But as he bent a laughing gaze upon the beloved face an indefinable something in its expression made him pause.

"In earnest, Alice ?" he asked.

The drooped eye-lids were raised, and for a moment each seemed to look into the other's very soul.

"Yes, in earnest," she replied.

Tom Dwyer's heart gave a great bound, and, as if to still its throbbing, he clasped her to his breast.

"You must never get into these gloomy moods again," said Alice, looking fondly up into his face.

"Never," he replied, pressing his lips to hers. *You have made me a better soldier and a better patriot than ever I was.*"

CHAPTER XXXVI.

SHANNACLOUGH IS MADE HAPPY.

"I AM tired of being a landlord," said Mr. Armstrong, as he somewhat abruptly entered the parlour at Rock-view, with his fishing-basket upon his back, having left the rod and the yellow pony outside the wire fence that protected the flower-beds in front of the house.

"How is that?" Mr. Cormack asked, looking up, in evident astonishment, from his newspaper.

"The fact is," returned Mr. Armstrong, seriously, "it is more costly to live now than it used to be. I find I must either sell my property or my pony. 'Tis a fine thing to be an 'estated man'; it brings one troops of friends and invitations to dinner. But I have got accustomed to the pony, and the walk to the river and back would be too much for me now. Don't imagine 'tis getting old I am," he continued, throwing back his shoulders. "No such thing. That voyage across the Atlantic has added at least twenty years to my life. Martin Dwyer is coming over, and we must settle the matter before I begin to fish, and this is the most promising day I have had yet," added the old angler going to the window and looking up at the clouds.

"You surprise me," returned Ned Cormack. "But as you have given us all such good leases it is not, of course, so serious a matter as it might be. Tom is at the fair to-day," he added; "but, perhaps, you have spoken to him about it?"

"Not directly," Mr. Armstrong replied; "but from

some hints I let drop the other day I think he must suspect that I am going to do something."

"So the question, 'Who is to be our landlord?' will turn up again," Ned Cormack remarked, absently, and looking more or less puzzled.

"There is to be no question about that at all," returned his landlord. "You will purchase your farm yourself."

"That's all moonshine *now*," Ned Cormack replied—the emphasis on the concluding monosyllable, no doubt, having reference to his son-in-law, the magistrate.

"Nonsense," Mr. Armstrong replied, rather impatiently. "And even if you had to borrow the money you could better afford to pay the interest than a poor man like me. But instead of borrowing I expect you will help Martin Dwyer to purchase his farm also. My only difficulty will be with Con Cooney. But I think I can manage that also, as Joe can lend him one hundred pounds and take the interest in grazing. It would be a great satisfaction to me to think that I have done something for Rody Flynn's daughter. I don't forget what Rody did for me when all the world besides had forgotten me. You know yourself what a deep debt of gratitude I owe poor Martin Dwyer. His mother was more than a mother to me, and his sister was a sister and a friend to me. I'd be glad to do yourself a service too, Ned; but I believe it is more for your wife's sake than your own, and more still for Alice's sake. And," he added after a pause and with a tremor in his voice, "and more than all for the sake of poor Aileen."

"You're a good man, Amby," said Ned Cormack, forgetting for a moment the amazement with which he had listened to the project for the purchase of the farms. "Ellen Dwyer told me long ago that you were a good man. She knew you, but none of the rest of us did. I never thought you had anything to trouble you. If I did you would not be left deserted, as you thought you were, at the time you speak of."

"Yes, Ned," was the reply, "if I was cold and hungry you and Martin Dwyer would help me. But Rody Flynn could see what none of you could see. By that little device of his—getting me to read for him at night—I really believe he saved me from a lunatic asylum."

"Are you sure you are in your right mind now?" Ned Cormack asked, surprised into giving utterance to the thought which this last remark of his landlord had suggested.

"I'd say you were joking," Mr. Armstrong replied, "only that you look as if you were really concerned. What makes you doubt my sanity?"

"Well, the cool way you talked about the purchase of the farms looks strange," returned Ned Cormack. "Where on earth is all the money to come from?"

"Two-thirds of it from the Board of Works," said Mr. Armstrong. "We must see what virtue is in the 'Bright Clauses.' Here is Martin Dwyer," he added; "and, mind, lose no time, for 'twould never do for me to let such a day as this slip through my fingers. And I have the most splendid flies you ever saw."

How delighted old Martin Dwyer seemed at the chestnuts and lime-trees, and the sheep and the lambs, and the flowers and the glass porch, and the scarlet geraniums, and everything, as he approached the house in a meandering sort of way, with Nannie and Nellie tripping by his side. It was a rule with Martin Dwyer, whenever business brought him to Rockview, to bring his little daughters with him.

"Where's Alice?" was his first question on coming into the parlour.

"I believe she's with her mother in the garden," Mr. Cormack replied.

"Oh! we'll go out to them," the twins exclaimed in a breath.

"I'll be sorry to part with you, Amby," said old Martin Dwyer, as if he were addressing a faithful servant; "but if, as you say, you can make me my own landlord, it is the next best thing to having you my landlord."

• “Just wait for a moment,” his landlord replied, “till I have this black hackle on the line, and I’ll make it all as plain as that two and two make four.” And having fixed the black hackle, and carefully wound the casting line around his white hat, he took a sheet of foolscap from his pocket and handed it to Ned Cormack.

“You certainly make it all very plain,” said that shrewd man of business. “’Twill be some loss to me, but it will be a great gain in the end to the young people, and those who will come after them. Do you mean to do it at once?”

“At once,” returned Mr. Armstrong. “I’ll never know an hour’s real peace and quietness till I abdicate. Get the pony put up in the stable,” he added; “I really haven’t a minute to lose.”

But just as he was hurrying off to his fishing Alice met him in the doorway, and as he took her proffered hand in his he said to himself that she was “more charming *now* than ever.” Alice did not shake hands with Martin Dwyer, but she held up a little namesake of his to kiss his grandfather.

“He’s a fine little fellow,” said Mr. Armstrong, catching hold of one of the little fat feet. “But I think young Rody Flynn has stouter legs.”

Nannie and Nellie seized upon the fat feet too, their father contenting himself with the possession of a single toe. But the unreasonable little creatures, becoming quite ravenous, pulled the coveted prize bodily from his mother’s arms, and ran off with him to the sofa, each seeming in some unaccountable way to have possession of the whole of him. And then followed such a crowing and laughing, and kicking of fat legs, and striking out right and left of dimpled fists as must have convinced the most sceptical beholder that Martin Dwyer the younger regarded being devoured as the reverse of disagreeable.

* * * * *

Con Cooney’s arrival at his father-in-law’s door

with a firkin of butter in the jennet's cart was a very ordinary occurrence; yet on this particular market day Con's "wo!" as he reached the door not only brought the jennet to a stand, but also put an instant and sudden stop to the hammering in the workshop. The two journeymen and the apprentice—you see the business was trebled since Charlie took charge of it—looked up and surveyed Con Cooney from head to foot in a sort of amazed and delighted wonder, which in a modified way was shared by the master of the establishment, though, owing to his beard and a certain sternness about the eyebrows and the square forehead, such emotions were not easily discernible in Charlie Flynn's face, except to his wife, who possessed the faculty of being able to see the good-humoured spirit and the merry glance through the beard and knitted brows "the same as always." And the moment Mave herself heard the sound of her brother's voice she just took a peep at him through the scarlet geranium, and then lifting—no easy task—young Rody Flynn up in her arms, hurried out to the workshop door, and took the "full of her eyes" of Con, as if the common-place proceeding of shaking up a handful of fresh-cut "soil" under the jennet's nose was quite an astonishing feat. Then Mave, tossing that awfully heavy infant upon the other arm, raised her mild blue eyes to the little homestead upon the mountain side with such an expression of pleased surprise in her gentle handsome face, that *anybody* might have seen the smile that broke through Charlie's thick beard as he looked at her.

There had been a new "arrival" in the little house on the mountain the day before. But as the event was by no means unlooked for—and as such events happen to be the rule, and not the exception, in most houses, whether little or big about that mountain—the mere fact that this was Con Cooney's first appearance in public in the capacity of a father would scarcely be enough to account for the unwonted manifestations

with which he was everywhere greeted upon this particular market-day.

Mr. and Mrs. Robert O'Keeffe had bowed graciously and smilingly to him from their carriage, though at the moment they were discussing the gloomy subject of the possibility of Father Feehan's purchasing the "disestablished" parsonage for the Sisters of Mercy, a calamity which would all but annihilate a hoped-for legacy which was to pay for the carriage and divers other things. Murty Magrath appeared to be more than usually active with his forefingers inside the white cravat, while Con Cooney, whom even Jim Foley honoured with a contemptuous grin, was passing over the bridge. And on hearing his arrival announced by Nell the Cobbler, in tones sufficiently loud and piercing to be heard from end to end of the street, Davy Lacy stood up from his seat and gravely threw his coat over his shoulders—to the no small satisfaction of young Davy, who resolved to spend the interval of his father's absence in practising the three jumps and throwing the lap-iron in one of the priest's fields; for spending almost every Sunday up the mountains since Julia Flynn's marriage had converted young Davy into quite an athlete.

Con Cooney pushed his firkin more exactly to the middle of the jennet's cart, trying hard to seem unconscious of the unusual share of notice bestowed upon him. He felt disappointed at missing his father-in-law's face, and wondered why *he* was not there to congratulate him. But Rody Flynn spent little of his time in the workshop now, and that little only for talking purposes, the "schemer" Charlie was wont to remark, considering that he had enough to do to attend to the "garden," and "see about" buying timber. Rody, however, was soon seen returning from the "garden," and, like everybody else—except, of course, Davy Lacy—greeted Con Cooney with a radiant face. The occasion seemed to be regarded on all hands as one that did not call for words, and demanded only smiles. But Davy Lacy,

having never been the possessor of a smile in his life, seemed to recognise the propriety of *his* having recourse to speech.

"I tell you what, Charlie," he remarked, "if ye did nothing else, ye made an estated man of your sister's husband."

"That's a fact," said Rody Flynn, raising his eyebrows. "Only for the Fenians we'd never hear of a land law with anything bright in it."

Rody Flynn was quite unconscious of having perpetrated a pun, for he honestly believed that the "Bright Clauses" in Mr. Gladstone's Land Act, of which he had latterly been hearing so much, were so called, not with any reference to their author's patronym, but because of the contrast they presented to the rest of that particular Act of Parliament as well as to English legislation for Ireland in general.

"'Tisn't all over yet," muttered Charlie Flynn, really angry that making Con Cooney an "estated man" should be regarded as quite a respectable outcome of the latest effort to achieve the national independence of Ireland. And Charlie Flynn resumed his work with such vigour—the apprentice and the two journeymen following his example as if they were all portions of the same machine—that the sudden hammering and trundling so frightened the jennet outside the door that she tossed up her head wildly, and was in the very act of taking to her heels down the street when her attention was frustrated by our friend George Ponsonby, who happened to come upon the scene just in time to prevent a catastrophe that would have frightened Shannaclough from its propriety, and sent Mrs. Laurence Foley into hysterics.

"Rody," said Ponsonby, having surrendered the reins to Con Cooney, "come down and give a touch to the pony's fetlocks before Mr. Amby goes to the river; he's in great spirits to-day, as the property is off his mind altogether, since the post came in." Rody Flynn started off to clip the yellow pony's fetlocks with such

alacrity that he was half way to Terry Hanrahan's corner when Ponsonby, whose eyes had been sweeping the horizon while he had been speaking, looked round as if, having got no reply to his request, he fancied he might not have been heard.

"Lord, he's off!" exclaimed Ponsonby, with a start, and clutching at his long black beard. "But, Con," he continued, checking his intention to start off after the little cooper, whose briskness made Mrs. Joe Cooney stare as he turned the corner, "I hope you'll take care of the pup, even though we won't be your landlord in future. How is he going on?"

"Rover 'll be nothin' to him, returned Con Cooney, emphatically.

"Don't talk nonsense," said Ponsonby, with a frown. "Sproule is annoying me about putting a log on Rover, as if such a gentle and beautiful creature should be treated like a cur or a bull-dog." And Ponsonby fixed his eyes full of indignant reproach upon Joe Sproule, who approached at that moment with measured tread along the curb stones.

"I'm sorry to be obliged to give you annoyance," the acting-constable replied; "but you don't know Parliament as well as I do. Beauty, whether mental or physical, is ignored by Parliament."

"If that was not so, *that* arm would not be trusting to two V's to-day," remarked his father-in-law, who had also gravitated to the cooper's workshop since Con Cooney's arrival.

"If you object to the log you can substitute a muzzle," said Acting-Constable Sproule.

"I'll make wan of soft calfskin for you that won't be either burthensome or disfigurin', interrupted Davy Lacy.

"Thank you, Davy," returned Ponsonby, as he hurried off to assist at the clipping of the pony's fetlocks, which he afterwards pronounced to have been executed "to the veins of nicety."

"'Tis a pity," said Rody Flynn, as Mr. Armstrong

was preparing to mount, "'tis a pity you couldn't purchase the whole parish or the whole county," he added, opening his round black eyes to their widest.

"Ah, Rody," returned Mr. Armstrong, "if I did, I fear most of it would be left on my hands, so few tenants would be able to raise so large a proportion of the purchase-money as is required. Martin Dwyer could not do it if Tom had not become Ned Cormack's son-in-law. And Con Cooney never could manage it if honest Joe had not come in for Terry Hanrahan's savings. Do you remember," he went on, after settling himself in the saddle, "do you remember the time I read the 'Deserted Village' for you, Rody?"

"I do, well," Rody Flynn replied. "And 'tis of'en I felt myself longing to have you read 'em all over again for me in the winter time."

"Well, when the nights get long we'll go over every one of them again," returned Mr. Armstrong, as he took his fishing rod from the old house-keeper's trembling hand.

"The poor masther," said old Gillen, when he had ridden off, followed by the white greyhound, "how pleasant he is, afther losin' his property. He bought the pony an' the property wud poor Miss Dora's fortune. An' now the property is gone, as he should sell the pony if he kep' 'id. These properties is quare things," added old Gillen; "an' the not one uv myself can make head or tail uv 'em."

"These women are all foolish," said Ponsonby, addressing a robin perched upon the red tiles of the old house; "all foolish, young and old. Come, Rody, till I show you the garden," he added, suddenly turning his eyes from the robin on the red-tiled roof to the top of the poplar tree—upon which Davy Lacy's gaze was fixed at the same moment, as leaning over Rody Flynn's half-door he discussed with Charlie and the two journeymen the probability of "that lad of his winning the prize for the three jumps at the next athletic sports," which, thanks to Charlie Flynn, are now an annual "institution" in Shannaclough

Ponsonby was highly pleased and flattered on observing the delighted expression in the little cooper's chubby face as he led him through the garden. But though Rody Flynn was by no means insensible to the excellence of Ponsonby's vegetables, his mind was almost entirely absorbed in the anticipated delights of the coming winter nights.

"The only difference will be," he thought, as Ponsonby called his attention to the celery, "that I won't have to snuff the candles. He'll have a lamp. An' even if he has candles, they'll be them candles that don't want to be snuffed. 'Tis *more* delight than ever I'll take in listenin' to him, though old as I am now. Glory be to God," he mentally exclaimed, as he followed Ponsonby to the carrots and parsnips, extending his arms and looking up to the blue sky—"Glory be to God! there's a great deal of happiness in this world—summer an' winter an' always!"

"They're first rate," said Ponsonby, attributing his companion's ecstasy to the parsnips. "You never saw better in the Queen's County."

"Mr. Armstrong is as happy as a king," Rody Flynn went on thinking—while Ponsonby imagined him giving all his attention to the beans—"because he's after doin' good without expectin' to be paid for it. An' if ever his mind is troubled he'll on'y have to look over there at the mountain an' say, I made an independent man of Rody Flynn's son-in-law, and brought Martin Dwyer home to Corringlea."

Ambrose Armstrong, for the second time in his life, created a sensation that day by riding at full gallop over Corringlea Bridge, never drawing rein till a yell from Cauth Manogue warned him that he was on the point of riding over a pack of hungry "darlings" waiting impatiently for the contents of the huge black pot to be poured into the big trough.

"We have won, Jessie," exclaimed the old angler, pulling up in time to prevent mischief.

Nellie and Nannie ran out to meet him, and Mrs.

Dwyer's joyous face at the dairy door was a picture to look at. But he dismounted without pretending to see any of them, letting the pony find her way to the stable, and hurried back to the river. It was the happiest of the many days that Ambrose Armstrong had spent between Glenbawn mill and the bridge of Corriglea; though, tested by the weight of the basket, it was a signal failure. Feeling presently tired he sat down upon a rushy knoll near the rustic gate, thinking to have the arch-framed picture, with the light of a mellow sunset upon it, all to himself.

"'Tis all like a dream," he thought as, turning from the house with the glass porch, he let his eyes rest upon the ivied farmhouse. "Have I really crossed the ocean and brought the exiles home?" As if in reply to his question the rustic gate was pushed open, and Nannie and Nellie came tripping over the soft grass to the rushy knoll, followed more slowly by Tom Dwyer, with Alice leaning upon his arm. Tom commenced mechanically to wind up the line and unscrew the joints of the fishing rod, as he had been accustomed to do ever since his schoolboy days, while Nannie and Nellie and Alice sat down upon the rushes at the old angler's feet, looking up almost worshippingly into his pale, handsome face. They all seemed too happy to think of talking, and when the fishing rod was tied up Tom Dwyer leant upon it like a warrior leaning upon his spear, and stroking his great beard, looked down upon the silent group with a sort of amused admiration. The old angler knew what they were waiting for. He had promised to tell them the whole story of his quiet life, since the day his father left him, a sickly child, at the old farmhouse, as soon as the property was "off his mind." This promise had been exacted after a visit which Alice and Nannie and Nellie had a little while before paid to Mrs. Bernard, who with grateful tears, as she held her little nieces—now, thank God, safe back in the dear old home—close to her heart, told them something of her old friend Amby Armstrong's

early days, and how fond he was of Alice's aunt, poor Aileen, who, Sister Bernard said, as she dried her eyes, was "too good and too beautiful for this world." Well, Ambrose Armstrong knowing what they were expecting, stroked his silver hair with his white slender hand, and looked from Nannie's soft blue eyes to Nellie's bright black ones.

"Well, now," said Mr. Armstrong, "where am I to begin?"

A glance, and at the same time a tender expression in Alice's face, as she raised her eyes to the bridge, made him look round—and there was old Martin Dwyer smiling down upon them. The old farmer turned sharply round on hearing a car approaching, and they all knew Con Cooney's jennet the moment they caught a glimpse of her ears. But it was a surprise to recognize in the driver Rody Flynn's chubby, laughing face. Martin Dwyer stepped briskly to the middle of the bridge to shake hands with Rody Flynn and with Mrs. Charlie Flynn and Mrs. Joe Cooney, who sat on a bag stuffed with hay in the little blue cart, both holding on to a new firkin, which it was desirable should be kept steady, as it contained some packages of groceries and a few bottles, besides a currant cake and two sixpenny "rustics." Almost immediately Con Cooney, and Joe Cooney and Charlie Flynn, and young Davy Lacy came up, walking very fast and evidently taking pains to keep the step. Julia would hear of no one as a godfather for her firstborn but Davy Lacy, who had taught her "fifteen tunes on the concertina."

"Two estated men, Con," said Martin Dwyer, as he shook hands with Con Cooney, who looked as elated and consequential as if there was nobody to be thanked but himself. "Well, Joe," he went on, "will you buy the yearlings?"

"I think we'll be able to come to a bargain, sir." Joe replied. "I'll go and have another look at 'em." And honest Joe, glad of a pretext to escape from keeping the step any longer, got over the stile into

the long meadow to the tune of the "Unfortunate Rake."

Charlie Flynn walked on carelessly enough, too, exchanging a slight nod with Tom Dwyer, who was still leaning upon Mr. Armstrong's fishing rod, requiring only suitable costume to make a very tolerable representative of a Celtic chief of the time "when Malachi wore the collar of gold." But Davy Lacy passed over the bridge with head erect, and shoulders thrown back, conscious that "the captain" did not quite forget who it was that took the handcuffs off his wrists on a certain moonlight night not so very long ago.

"Julia Flynn will be very happy to-night," said Mr. Armstrong as the jennet trotted on, "with her father and brother and all her friends about her in the mountain home. But," he added smiling, "it is a question which will Rody Flynn be most delighted to see—his grandson or the little brown cow's calf! But really, Alice," he continued, "I must put off my story till another time. You don't know what a lecture I'd get from Ponsonby if I should not be home at a reasonably early hour. How would he know, he says, but that I met with some accident. And I really don't like to cause the poor fellow pain when I can help it."

They all stood up to accompany him to the ivied farmhouse, where Martin Dwyer was just then putting the saddle on the yellow pony with his own hands.

But we shall say farewell to Mr. Armstrong on the very spot where you first met him, trusting that he will make his appearance by the riverside with the primroses and the sloe blossoms for many a spring to come, and see many a summer and autumn sunset through the middle arch of Corrignlea Bridge. And that even in the loney winter time, no cloud, which Rody Flynn and Oliver Goldsmith cannot chase away, will ever darken his spirit, till the last rosebud is dropped upon Aileen Cormack's grave, and Amby Armstrong himself sleeps his last sleep under the elms in PEACE and QUIETNESS.

$$\begin{array}{r} 384 \\ 316 \\ \hline 68 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 384 \\ 277 \\ \hline 661 \end{array}$$

250

$$\begin{array}{r} 33.07 \\ 52.20 \\ \hline 85.27 \end{array}$$

